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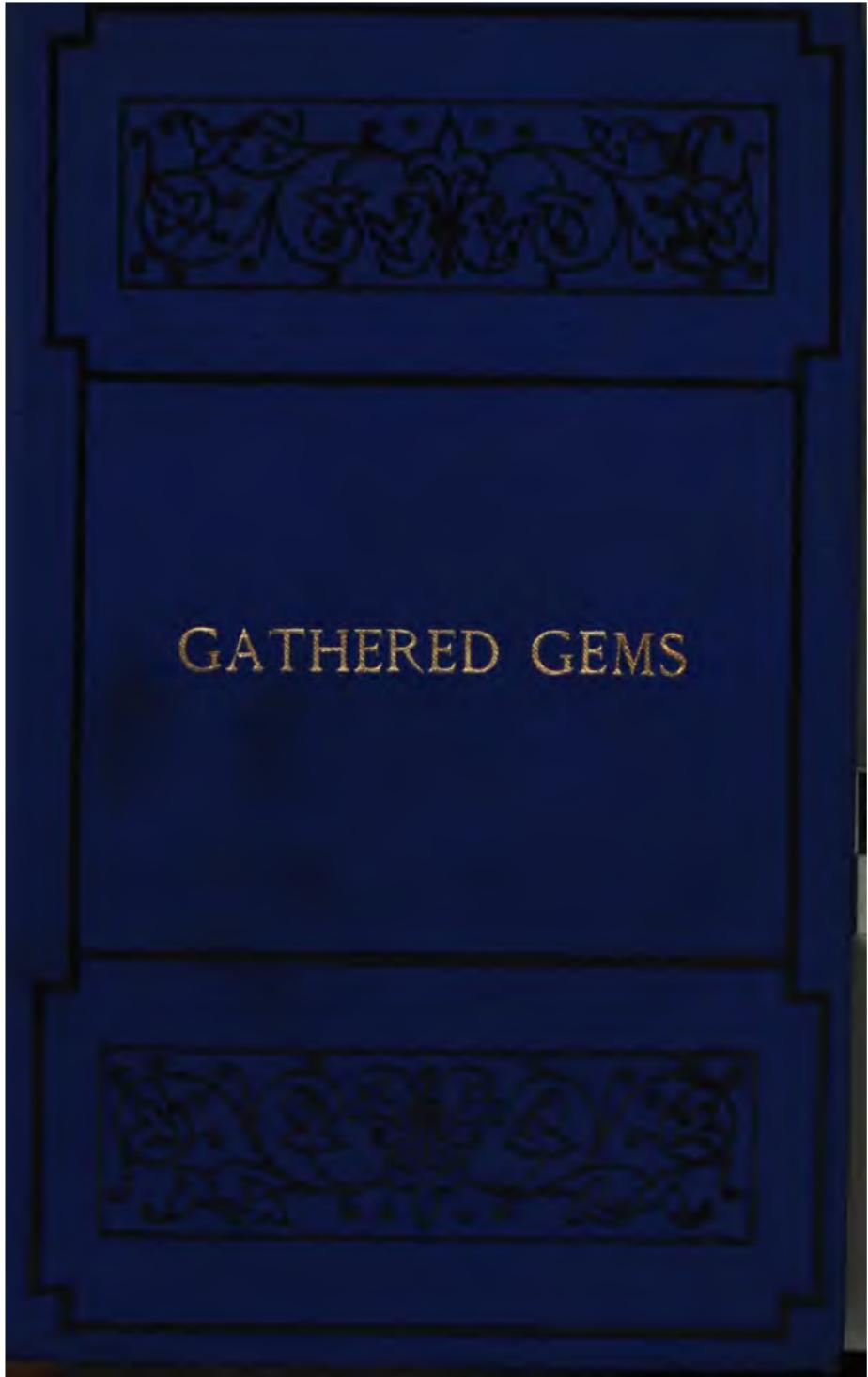
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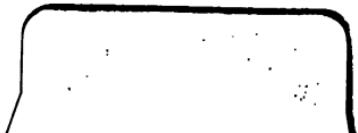


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GATHERED GEMS



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**GATHERED GEMS.**



# GATHERED GEMS

From Spanish Authors.

BY

MARIANA MONTEIRO.



LONDON:  
R. WASHBOURNE, 18 PATERNOSTER ROW.  
1878.

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## P R E F A C E.

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**W**Hilst engaged in the study of Spanish literature, I frequently found short articles, tales, and legends of considerable beauty, the greater number written with the object of inculcating a high purpose, or pointing a moral. The few which form this present volume have been taken exclusively from modern authors, and are the varied productions of the gifted pens of several writers of eminence. Foremost among them stands Fernan Caballero, who, but a few short months since, was laid in her honoured grave after a long life and brilliant career, which rendered her name famous in the literary world. Others are from the works of Adolfo Bequer,

whose future gave such promise of glorious work, yet was taken from our midst in the prime of life, and ere his fame had extended to other lands; the many beautiful thoughts which he left behind making his untimely loss an undying regret.

Such are a few of the Gathered Gems which, in memory of those genial writers, I offer to the English public, trusting that they will be as kindly received as have been my former efforts in bringing forward some of the hidden wealth of Spanish authors.

**MARIANA MONTEIRO.**

**4, BRUNSWICK VILLAS,  
HILL ROAD, N.W.**



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GATHERED GEMS  
FROM  
SPANISH AUTHORS.

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The Rosary Bell.

“ Bienheureuse la cloche au gosier vigoureux,  
Qui malgré sa vicillesse, alerte et bien portante,  
Jette fidèlement son cri religieux  
Ainsi qu'un vieux soldat qui veille sous sa tente.”

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

“ Men who are solely occupied with material interests may not comprehend this language, nor estimate at its true value the superior influence which humanizes the masses, and unfolds civilization.”—MONSIEUR DONNET, Archbishop of Bordeaux.

**S**CEPTICS think that bells have a meaningless sound, and believe that they only serve as trumpets for the clergy to interpose their claims, and interrupt the busy course of men's lives. “ What mission can these importunate callers have ?” Is

it to announce a death ? What horror ! Of what use their clamorous reminder ? *We must die*—we know that already. And why that ceaseless *Mane, Thecel, Phare's* in the pleasure feast of life ? Do they tell us of a christening ? What is it to us whether another being has entered this life, or that he should have been admitted into the Christian fold ? Do they bid us come to church on the festival day, and to attend the divine offices ? Well indeed ! do they think perchance that *we* shall care to assist at them ?

Yes, in this manner do those speak who would destroy all things, from the summit of the belfry down to the deepest foundations of our holy temples, and silence every religious call, for when was aggression more daring, or hostility more bitter, or intolerance more despotic than in this age, which carries emblazoned in vain pomp upon its standards the words, *Philanthropy, Tolerance, Liberty, and Rights of the People.*

These bells, which so greatly disconcert the enlightened citizen, are for the poor and the simple, who so well understand them, their

spiritual bond with the world. They are their consolation, their guide, their monitor, their calendar, and their timepiece ; they are the voices which speak to them and tell them always something, because they form the means by which the Church speaks to her children, and the voice moreover which speaks more markedly to those who, deprived of other means of communication, are unaware of the course of events, and of the flight of time.

These bells tell them that they are watched over by spiritual guides, and that they are not alone or bereft of comfort. They bid them come together to pray in the manner that our Redeemer instituted prayer, which was by joining their supplications together. They tell them that in the Church is the bond sanctified which gives honour and position to the spouse they love, stability and respect to their affections, and a name and standing to their children, thus forming those family bonds which are as holy as they are sweet, as necessary to old age as they are useful in youth. They tell them to take their children there,

that they may enter the fold of Holy Church ; and they bid them also resort there if at the hour of death they desire consolation for their souls, and holy burial for their bodies.

The bell at day-dawn reminds the faithful that the hour for work and for prayer has arrived—those two paths by which they are to pass securely from this life into eternal bliss. It anticipates the festival day by the vesper call, and each festival is a new lesson. At midday it announces the hour when the labourer rests from his morning toil ; and at the fall of day, when the Angelus bell peals forth which salutes the Mother of God, it also tells them that the day's work is over. This bell also warns them, ere they sink to their sleep and much-needed repose, to remember the dead, and to pray for eternal rest for their souls. Bells mark the course of time in the same manner as they announce the birth of a babe, or the exit of a man out of this life, by striking each hour as it passes away for ever ; and the heedless worldling says, “ Behold an hour has passed away, let us profit by the next one, time is capital.”

With powerful, fearful tones, they sound the alarm, and summon together all men when help is needed. In solemn, single strokes, they sound a death knell, and the enlightened philosopher exclaims : "A death knell ! how sad, how distressing, what importunity ! this really ought to be prohibited !" But the devout man bends his head and says : " May God grant him eternal bliss !"

And when the blessed *Viaticum* is about to be taken from the church and carried to the sick, the bell announces the event, and the enlightened sceptic takes a wide round to avoid meeting the procession. But the poor, faithful Christian kneels down, and, without so much as knowing what the word philanthropy means, prays for his fellow man whom he has never seen.

Why then, and by what right, would he who calls himself enlightened and a philanthropist, wish to deprive the people of their holy missionaries, that better than the doctrines enunciated by him, inculcate the doctrines of philanthropy and true enlightenment ? By what right, and what reasons does he allege

for silencing and prohibiting those calls, those warnings, and those consolations which they spread far and wide from their lofty heights, which descend upon us from so pure an atmosphere ?

No ; do not be silenced, sweet and powerful voice, which unites us, which teaches us and awakens our memories, consoles us in our sorrows, and is a companion in our solitude, and a friend in our bereavements !

Would civilization—which cannot silence the deadly roar of the cannon—attempt to hush thy holy, consoling voice ?

No ; for if there are strong motives and reasons of social convenience for preserving the first, there is a gentle, though no less potent moral power, which makes us respect the voice of peace and mercy by which the Church, that is to say the religion of Christ, calls and admonishes her children.

In your native place, have you no bell which at the fall of day calls you to prayer ? Have you not heard it from your infancy, when nestling on your mother's bosom ? And when you have gone far from that home and hearth, have

you not heard its echo within your heart ? And is not the memory of its sweet voice mingled with the voices of parents, of the friends of your childhood, and the remembrance of your native country ? I appeal to those who have parents whom they love and honour, a country which they enthusiastically cherish, and a heart which retains its recollections like the heavens at night preserve in countless brilliant stars, the refulgence of the glorious sun.

Call to mind that voice, immutable as the voice of conscience, which makes itself equally heard in the tranquil course of a summer's evening, as in the roaring of the tempest on a winter's night, and tell me, did it say nought ? Perchance, did not that voice, which in the midst of the busy throng below is solemn, and which rises calm above the deafening roar of the tempest, and on all occasions is clear, pure, and divested of all external influences, draw your soul upwards to dwell in its intangible atmosphere ?

When the day is past, and twilight takes its place; in that hour when the sun no longer

dazzles the sight, yet darkness has not over-spread all things, there is a bell in my natal place which is then heard sounding. It is the bell of a chapel. For many long years it has rung every evening, and summoned the faithful to meet together to say the Rosary—that popular devotion to the Virgin, symbolised by a crown of Roses.

Sorrows and calamities have passed over our village, as well as happy days ; but the bell, under all circumstances, has called each night to prayer.

Enemies and conquering armies have entered this town ; rulers averse to religion have sat on the throne ; many bells have been silenced, and others taken down and melted to make base coin ; but nothing has daunted our bell, nor made it hush its pious call ! And each evening, with holy constancy, has it lifted up its voice and summoned the faithful.

To listen to its beloved voice has become a habit of years, and its sounds have often calmed the anguish of my heart, soothed the bitterness of trials with its comforting tones ; and were its eloquent voice to be silenced, it would

leave in my heart, as well as in the hearts of numberless others, a void like that caused by the loss of a beloved friend.

Yet those tones have not always sounded to me in the same manner; but in each event of my life have spoken differently, although always in an analogous manner.

How often pensively have I watched the light of day disappearing, and awaited that light which men kindle—a light without mellowness, without dew, without the fiery streaks of sunset or day-dawn, and without bringing with its rays the merry songs of birds, cold and eventual, like all that is artificial—and have listened for that bell, sad yet comforting, and I have recapitulated and felt over again the past emotions which it had called up.

When as a child I heard that bell—I mean in those days when quietude was intolerable and movement a necessity—it seemed to speak to me in the solemn tones of my teacher, who then used to say, "*Come to pray, my child; come to pray.*" "There they go," I used to reply, "the dear little old women to say the Rosary." And this I said because whenever

I was taken to the chapel at that hour, I had always seen a poor old woman, but so clean and tidy, so decent and placid, that she had captivated my infantile sympathies, with that early instinct by which children *feel* rather than *discern* what is good or bad.

Years passed on, and the time came when I adorned my head with flowers and entwined my mind with fond hopes of bliss, and when I would tear a prophetic daisy petal by petal repeating as I did so, "*Shall it come? Shall it come soon? Shall it come late? Shall it never come?*" And then that bell seemed to tell me, "*Come here, come here,*" and I judged that the call, which did not make my heart beat, promised a more certain happiness than any other. So true is it that felicity is sad, because it ever carries with it the presentiment of its instability.

"Tu dis vrai. Le bonheur, Amie, est chose grave  
Il veut des cœurs de bronze, et lentement s'y grave.  
Le plaisir l'effarouche en lui jettant des fleurs ;  
Son sourire est moins pré du rire que des pleurs."

Thou sayest well; happiness is a solemn thing. It needs a heart of bronze upon which

to engrave itself slowly. Joy shrinks back as it casts upon it its flowers, and its smile is nearer to tears than to laughter.

In those days I knew not how to define, much less put into words, what I felt, and my heart, like an echo, would repeat the sentiments of the poets I read.

Shortly after this I experienced a happiness given to few to enjoy. I saw myself in the midst of all the objects of my holiest affection. Then I listened delightfully to the bell, which told me, "*Give thanks to God ! give thanks to God !*" And I truly did thank Him, because my heart always responded to its call.

But very soon were the presentiments realised which felicity brings on its impalpable wings. A day came dark as night, full of anguish like doubt, sad like one who is bidden to depart, and where, in place of the objects of my dearest affections, I was hemmed round by graves ! I was alone, and in despair.

Then—when the sun was carrying away the light and joy from the heavens, like death had taken from me the joy of my heart—then the

bell sounded in my ears, soft and consoling, as it told me, "*Thou art not alone ; no, thou art not desolate.*" And on hearing that beloved voice, the cry of sorrow became hushed into a lament, and my loud sobs were calmed down into sighs.

I remembered the good, patient old woman who continued, day after day, attending the chapel to say the Rosary, and I repeated in allusion to her the following lines of M. Valmore :—

“ Toi que l'on plaint, toi que j'envie,  
Pauvre errante de nos hameaux ;  
Toi qui n'attends plus des mortels  
Ni ton bonheur ni ta souffrance.  
Oh ! donne-moi les cheveux blancs  
Ta marche pésant et courbée  
Ta memoire enfin absorbée,  
Qui dort comme tes pas tremblants.”

Thou whom men pity and I envy, poor wanderer of our hamlets ! Thou who dost not expect from mortals thy happiness nor thy sorrows ! Oh ! give me thy whitened locks, thy slow, bending pace, thy fading memory, that slumbers like thy faltering steps.

When sorrows fell thickly upon me, my lot

became bitter, and cruel ingratitude added its sting to my wretchedness. When reality offered me no respite and hope no promises ; when in the wrestling my spirit fainted, thy pure consoling voice would tell me, "*Here you will find succour; here you will find comfort.*"

Friends kindly persuaded me to leave my native country, and to seek in other lands an alleviation for my sorrows and a change of scene for the mind. But my sorrow I carried with me ; and when I wept for my beloved country, for my sunny sky, for my friends and my altars, I heard in spirit the far-distant, gentle voice of my village bell, which bade me "*Return, return.*" And I quickly answered that loving voice.

Then I embarked, and a fearful storm shook the frail vessel ; and when it rocked from side to side at the mercy of the waves and winds, like a man under the paroxysm of a burning fever, and I feared it would be unable to combat against its fury ; when the wind moaned a deathly wailing ; when the waves beat furiously against its side, and then would recoil to assail the ship with redoubled force—

above that terrible uproar and furious discord, with closed eyes, seeking in my mind for a gleam of hope, I heard that bell sounding in my ears, and then it told me, "*Return, return; here you will find a haven of rest and security!*"

Yes, gentle, loving bell, thou didst promise me the twofold haven of security and peace. And I remembered the little beggar woman, who never had gone far from thee, and who so calmly trod the path of her mortal pilgrimage.

Once more I returned to my native place, and I hastened to answer the call which I had heard so far away.

There, indeed, was the old woman, weighed down by years, it is true, but always punctual, always faithful. I knelt down in that little chapel, and sobbed as though my heart would break. I looked at the dear little old woman, and I noticed that she also was in tears. I hastened to her side, and as love is usually the cause of tears, I asked her whether she had lost any one dear to her.

"Yes," she replied, "*I have lost my saintly benefactor, and I come here to pray for him.*"

"I also have come to do the same ; I came to pray for my father, who was also my benefactor. Pray who was yours ?" I asked.

The old woman raised her well nigh sightless eyes to the altar, and murmured the *name of my own father !*

That bell had called us both to fulfil a holy duty !

Thanks ! thanks ! my beneficent friend ! Thanks for the consolation which thy pure and saintly voice has poured upon my life ! Continue for ever spreading those sounds which have been gifted by God with so much virtue and power ; those calls, which are strange to none, and to few prove unsympathetic, like comfort, like brotherhood, like the admonition to do good. Do not fear that thy voice will not be heeded ; for I have heard thee with the ears of my heart many hundreds of miles away. The remembrance of thy voice has been to me like a smile, which is at one time melancholy and at others pleasant, but which has always reminded me of God. "*Remember thy God.*" These very words hast thou spoken to past generations, and these same ones thou

wilt continue to speak to future ones, because thy voice is imperishable and thy consolations eternal. Oh! may no profane, sacrilegious hand ever cast thee down, for thy mission is to call and gather together the flock, not for conspiracy, amusement, or for business, but for *work*—that holy duty, which may find those who are *indifferent* to its call, but which it is inconceivable how it should ever find enemies.

Pious bell, the voice of Christian confederation, the call of the Church of Christ, only power which, not by words, but by deeds, makes us all more than equals—makes us brothers—do not ever desist from gathering together the sheep into the fold; do not be chilled by the cold atmosphere which surrounds thee in these our days of coldness and irreligion, because there are still many ardent, fervent hearts, whose warmth will enwrap thy pure voice, whose adhesion and deep love for the religion in which thou takest so great a part when thou dost proclaim its calls with a ringing voice, bears the distinctive badge, the felicity, the praise, the standard, the magnificent denomination of the “*The Faithful.*”



## The Blind Organist of Seville.

A LEGEND OF CHRISTMAS EVE.

---

### I.

**D**O you know Maese Perez? Ah, you are but a stranger here. Well, he is a saintly man, poor indeed, but charitable to a degree. Many communities have sought to engage him, and even the Archbishop has offered him a heap of gold to induce him to be the organist of the Cathedral; but he would sooner part with life than leave his dear old organ. He has no relations but a daughter, and no friends save his organ. He spends his whole life in watching over the innocence of his child, and in composing fugues for his organ. Mind you, his organ is old indeed, but

so skilful are his hands, and so loving, that beneath them it peals forth wonderful notes. Poor man ! he has been blind from his birth, yet he knows every inch of his beloved organ, and how patiently does he bear his misfortune !

When he is asked what he would give to gain his sight, he replies : " Much indeed—yet not so much as you would think, because I still have hopes."

" Hopes of seeing, do you say ?"

" Yes, and very soon," he would add, smiling like an angel. " I have already lived seventy-six years, and however long my life may be, *I shall soon see . . . God !*"

Poor dear man ! Yes, he will indeed see God ! because he is humble, like the stones on the road, that allow all the world to tread upon them. He always says that he is only a poor organist, yet he could well give lessons to the Choir-master of the Cathedral. His father followed the same profession, and used to take his son always with him to blow the organ. The boy showed such aptitude, that at his father's death he was offered to take his place,

and inherited the charge. Oh, what hands he has! May God bless them! He always plays well, but on a Christmas night he is a perfect wonder. Above all things does he love the midnight Mass, and when the priest elevates the Sacred Elements at the hour when our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, the tones of his organ sound like the voices of angels.

But why should I extol what we shall hear to-night? It suffices to see how the noblest and highest of Seville, aye, even the Archbishop himself, flock to this humble convent to listen to his performance; but do not think that it is only the wise and the learned who love the music of Maese Perez; the people do so also. All these, whom on such a night as this, you see walking about the streets, filling the air with shouts of laughter, and singing ditties, are struck dumb, like dead men, when Maese Perez places his hands upon the keys of the organ . . . . and at the Elevation . . . . you might hear a pin drop . . . . every eye is full of tears, and when it is over, a sound is heard like a deep-drawn sigh: nothing

else but that immense crowd drawing breath after that solemn music.

But let us go in, for the bells have ceased, and the Mass will soon commence.

---

## II.

The church was gorgeously illuminated. The floods of light that poured down from the altars from thousands of wax candles, filled the whole church, and threw a thousand rays upon the rich jewels of the ladies, who, kneeling on velvet cushions, formed a brilliant circle round the altar rails. Behind them, arrayed in uniform and gala dress, stood the knights and first nobility of Seville, their breasts covered with decorations, stars, and medals, their hands holding plumed caps, or resting upon the hilts of their swords, as though they wished to form a bulwark of defence for their wives and daughters, against the multitudes behind. This crowd, that surged like an unquiet sea at the end of the building, broke forth in a murmur of joy when they saw the Archbishop coming, who, after seating himself

upon a crimson throne near the high altar, blessed the people three times.

It was the hour when the Mass should commence. A few moments, however, passed, and the celebrant Priests did not appear. The noble knights exchanged a few words in a hushed tone, and the Archbishop sent a messenger to the sacristy to know the reason of the delay.

"Maese Perez has been taken ill, very ill, and it will be impossible for him to perform at the midnight Mass," was the answer.

This news spread like wildfire among the crowds, who had begun to be impatient, and it would be vain to describe the disappointment it caused.

At that moment a gaunt-looking man, lean, bony, and sour-eyed as well, stepped forward, and addressed the Archbishop, saying :

"Maese Perez is ill, and the ceremony cannot begin. If your Eminence wishes, I will play the organ in his absence, for Maese Perez is not the first organist in the world, nor at his death will this organ grow silent for the want of players."

The Archbishop made a sign of assent. Some of the faithful who knew this stranger to be an envious organist, and an enemy of the one at Santa Inés, began murmuring, when suddenly a great noise was heard in the porch.

“Maese Perez is here! Maese Perez is here!” rose above that uproar, and every eye turned towards the entrance of the church.

Maese Perez, pale and deathly, was being carried into the church in an arm-chair, which a number of hands were striving to lift upon their shoulders.

The injunctions of the doctors, and the tears of his daughter, had been unavailing to prevent him from rising from his bed.

“No,” he said, “I cannot die without visiting my organ. I know this will be the last time, and on this night, above all others—Christmas Eve—I *must* play upon it once more. Come, I wish it; nay, I command it. Come, let us go to the church.”

His wishes were fulfilled. The bystanders raised him in their arms, and took him to the organ gallery, and the Mass commenced.

At that moment the clock of the cathedral was heard striking the hour of twelve,

The Introit, the Gospel, the Offertory were said, and the solemn moment had come when the Priest, after the consecration, proceeds to elevate the Form,

A cloud of incense—which rose up in blue, undulating waves—filled the church. The bells rang with a vibrating sound, and Maese Pérez placed his palsied hands upon the keys of the organ.

The hundred voices of its metal tubes resounded in a majestic chord, which was prolonged until it gradually died away as though a gust of wind had ravished its last echoes.

This first chord, which sounded like a voice rising from earth to heaven, was responded to by another, far distant and soft, but which continued swelling until it became a torrent of high-sounding harmony. It was like the voice of angels traversing space and coming down to the world.

Then began to be heard a marvellous hymn, sounding from far away as though sung by hierarchies of seraphim: a thousand hymns at

once, yet which mingled together formed one alone. Yet even this was but an accompaniment to a still higher and more heavenly strain, which seemed to float above this ocean of divine music, like mists over the waves of the sea.

Then the angelic voices of this heavenly choir became hushed one by one; only two voices remained at length answering each other—then one alone sustaining a divine, clear note, like a vibrating beam of light. . . . The celebrant Priest bowed down, and above his venerable, hoary head, and as though across a blue gauze formed by the incense cloud, the Host was raised. At that instant the note which Maese Perez held down thrilling, opened wide and wider still, until a tremendous outburst of harmony shook the church, reverberating in the compressed air of the angles, making the many-coloured windows tremble in their narrow frames.

From each note of this magnificent chord a new hymn seemed to unfold itself; some hymns near, others far; some brilliant, others deep and low; and it might truly be said that

the waters, the birds, the breeze, and the waving fronds, men and angels, earth and heaven, were all singing in their own tongue a hymn of praise for the birth of a Saviour.

The crowd below were listening in astonishment and breathless silence. Tears flowed from every eye, and each spirit was wrapped in profound ecstasy.

The hands of the officiating Priest trembled, because that One Whom men and archangels were saluting in such tender, joyful strains, was his God, and it seemed as though his mortal eyes had seen the very heavens open.

The organ still resounded, but its tones were gradually dying away, like a voice passing from echo to echo, and, wafted away, becoming weaker as it departs further and further.

Suddenly a cry was heard in the organ-gallery, sharp and piercing—the shriek of a woman.

The organ gave forth a strange, discordant sound, like a sob, and remained silent.

That piercing cry had broken the religious ecstasy of the crowd, who rushed to the stairs

leading to the gallery, whilst every eye was turned in anxiety towards the spot.

“What has happened? What is the matter?” was asked on all sides, as one of the attendants, who had been the first to ascend into the gallery, was returning, pale and sorrowful, to apprise the Archbishop of what had taken place.

“*Maese Perez has ceased to live!*”

And it was truly so. When those nearest the gallery had ascended the stairs, they saw that the poor organist had fallen forward over the keys of his ancient instrument, which still vibrated, but in a discordant manner; and his daughter, on her knees at his feet, was calling upon him in vain, in a voice broken by sobs and tears.

---

### III.

“Good evening, my Señora Doña Baltasara. Are you also coming to-night to the midnight Mass?”

“Yes, señor. It seems to be true that the organist of San Roman—that sour-eyed fellow,

who is always finding fault with the performance of other organists—is to play on this Christmas night in place of Maese Perez. And you must know that no one—not even his daughter, who is a professor, and since her father's death entered the convent as a novice—has ventured to touch his instrument. For, accustomed to listen to such wonderful strains, who else would dare to fill his place? After the community had decided that in honour of Maese Perez, and as a mark of respect to his memory, his organ should not be touched on this Christmas night, behold this man presents himself and says *he* dares to play upon it! There is nothing more presumptuous than ignorance. But see how the crowds are flocking to the doorway, as though nothing were changed since last year; the same nobility, the same extravagance in dress, the same excitement in the porch, the same crowd in the church. Alas! were the dead man to rise from his grave, he would die over again of grief that *his* organ should be desecrated by such hands. See, the hero of this performance is coming! Come in; for the Archbishop has

already arrived, and the Mass is to commence. Come, for it appears to me that the events of to-night will give us plenty to talk about."

Saying this, the good woman pushed her way in, and we entered the church of Santa Inès.

The service had already commenced.

The church was brilliantly lit up, as in former years.

The new organist, after kissing the Archbishop's ring before commencing to play, ascended the gallery, and swept his hands over the notes of the organ in an affectedly grave manner.

The long-expected moment at length arrived—that solemn moment, when the Priest elevates the Host. The bells began to ring, sounding like a shower of crystal notes; clouds of incense arose, and the organ note was heard.

The first note was harsh and discordant; but the second chord was powerful, magnificent, rising from the metal tubes of the organ, and swelling out like a cascade of harmony, inexhaustible and sonorous.

Celestial songs that greet the ear during

moments of rapture; songs perceived by the spirit, yet which the lips cannot repeat; stray notes of some distant melody heard at intervals, as it is brought in the gust of the winds; murmur of leaves as they kiss each other, liquid and soft, like gentle rain; trills of larks rising from amongst the flowers like a dart shot up to the skies; resounding blasts without number, imposing and awe-inspiring, like the booming of thunder; winged hymns, falling from and reascending to the throne of God like a mighty torrent of light and sound—all this was expressed by the hundred voices of the organ, yet with more power, more mysterious poetry, and a more fantastic colouring than it had ever expressed before.

\*       \*       \*       \*

When the organist descended from the gallery, the crowd on the stairs was very great who wished to see and congratulate him, and one of the attendants was obliged to clear a way through them to lead him up to the high altar, where the Archbishop was awaiting him.

" You see how I have come from my palace only to hear your playing," the Prelate said when he was brought to him. " Will you be as cruel as Maese Perez, who never would save me this journey on Christmas night, by coming to play during midnight Mass in my cathedral ? "

" Next year, your Eminence," replied the organist, " I promise to fulfil your request ; because not for all the gold of the globe would I again perform on this organ."

" And why not ? " demanded the Archbishop.

" Because," added the organist, as he endeavoured to master the emotion which was clearly manifested in the deathly pallor of his countenance—" because it is old and worthless, and cannot express all that is required."

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#### IV.

Another year had passed away. The Abbess of the Convent of Santa Inès and the daughter of Maese Perez were conversing together in a low tone, half concealed amid the shadows of the church choir. The small tinkling bell in

the tower was calling the faithful to Mass, and a stray person or two would silently cross the porch and take a seat in some corner of the church, where the inhabitants of that neighbourhood were quietly waiting for midnight Mass to commence.

" You can plainly perceive," the Abbess was saying, " that your fears are very childish. There is no one in the church; all Seville is flocking to the cathedral. Do you play the organ to-night, and play it confidently; for we shall be only in community. But why do you continue silent? and why do you sigh?"

" I am so afraid, mother," the young novice replied in trembling accents.

" Afraid! And of what?"

" I know not—something supernatural. Last night, when I heard you say that you wished me to play the organ to-night during Mass, I, proud of such a distinction, thought I would come and arrange the stops and tune the organ, in order to surprise you. I came to the choir—alone; I opened the door that leads to the organ gallery. The clock of the cathedral was striking some hour—I know not

which, but the strokes of the bell were very sad and many—oh, many!—they continued their strokes during all the time that I remained nailed to the door, and those moments seemed to me an age. The church was empty and dark. There, at the farther end, shining like a lost star in the heavens of night, flickered a light—the light of the lamp that burns before the high altar. By its faint reflection, which only contributed to render more visible all the deep-felt gloom of the shadows, I saw—I saw *him*! Oh, mother! do not doubt me! I saw a man, who, silently and with his back turned towards where I stood, was sweeping over the keys of the organ with one hand, whilst with the other he touched the stops . . . . and the organ sounded, but in an indescribable manner. Each note was like a smothered sigh coming from within each of the metal tubes, and vibrated in the compressed air within, producing a hoarse strain, almost imperceptible, yet in perfect tune. And the clock of the cathedral continued striking, and that man still touched the keys. I could even hear his

breathing. Terror had chilled the blood in my veins ; I felt a glacial cold spread itself all over my body, and my temples seemed on fire. I tried to cry out, but could not. That man had turned his head round and looked at me. . . . I say wrong ; he had not *looked* at me, for he was blind. He was my father!"

"Go, my child," the Abbess replied, "and put away those fantasies, by which the evil spirit endeavours to frighten and trouble weak and timid minds. Your father is in heaven, and from thence, rather than frighten you, he will inspire his daughter to play with greater zeal, and love, to honour this solemn ceremony, in which he always took such delight. Take courage ; do as I bid you, and go fearlessly to the organ gallery, for the Mass is about to commence, and the people are getting impatient."

The Abbess went across the choir to take her seat in the centre of the community. The daughter of Maese Perez opened the door of the gallery with a trembling hand, and proceeded to seat herself on the organ-bench, and the Mass commenced.

The Mass began and continued without anything occurring until the consecration. The organ was heard pealing at that moment, and an instant after a shriek from the daughter of Maese Perez rang through the church.

The Abbess, the nuns, and the faithful all rushed to the gallery.

“Look at him! look at him!” the young novice was saying, fixing her staring eyes on the bench, from which she had risen in terror and astonishment, and holding on to the railing of the gallery.

Every one directed their looks towards that spot. The organ was deserted, yet it continued sounding . . . . sounding as only the archangels could imitate in their raptures of mystic rejoicing.

\* \* \* \*

“Have I not told you a hundred times, my Señora Doña Baltasara, that here there are spirits? Listen. Were you not last evening at the midnight Mass? Nevertheless, you must have heard what occurred, for nothing else is spoken of in Seville. . . . My Lord

Archbishop is furious, and with reason . . . . he gave up coming to Santa Inès, as was his practice on Christmas night, and therefore did not witness the prodigy. And for what did he attend his cathedral ? Why, simply to hear a discordant jingle ; for those who heard it say that what the organist of San Bartolomé performed in the cathedral was nothing else. . . . . I always said that what we heard here last Christmas Eve certainly was never played by that sour-eyed fellow. . . . . No, indeed, he could not produce such music. . . . . There are spirits here ; and in effect the spirit was no more nor less than the soul of Maese Perez, the blind organist of Santa Inès.







# The Last Baron of Fortcastell.

A ROMANCE OF PROVENCE.



*"I was the Veritable Theobaldo de Montagut, Baron of Fortcastell. Nobleman or plebeian, lord or commoner, whomsoever you may be that lingers for a moment over the sod of my grave, believe in God as I have believed, and pray for me."*

## I.

**N**OBLE knight-errant, who, lance in hand, drawn visor, and mounted upon powerful steed, dost traverse the wide world, with no other patrimony than thy brilliant name and thy sword, seeking honour and glory in the profession of arms; if, when crossing the broken valley of Montagut, thou hast been overtaken by the storm and the darkness of night, and hast found

shelter among the ruins of the monastery at its base—listen to me.

## II.

Shepherd that with slow steps dost follow thy lambs and ewes, wandering on the hills and plains, if when leading them to the banks of the clear stream which flows and leaps among the broken rocks of the valley of Montagut, thou hast found shade from the sun in the height of summer, and repose for thy noon-tide siesta under the ruined arches of the monastery, whose moss-covered, broken pillars touch the waters—listen to me.

## III.

Maiden of the neighbouring village, lily of the field, blooming contentedly under the shelter of thy own humility, if on the festival morn of thy patron Saint, on descending to the valley of Montagut to gather clover and daisies with which to adorn the little altar, or tiny statue, or picture in thy humble dwelling, thou dost overcome the fear with which the weird-looking ruins of the darksome monastery inspire thee, and hast entered its silent,

deserted cloisters, wandering among its abandoned tombs, seeking on their sod for the finest marigolds, and bluest of hyacinths—listen to me.

IV.

Thou noble knight, thou wandering shepherd, browned under the sun's rays; thou beautiful damsel, still covered with dew-drops, like tears—all of ye must have seen in that holy place a tomb, a lowly grave. At one time the spot was marked by a rough stone and a wooden cross; the cross is no longer there; only the slab remains. In this grave, the epitaph of which forms the theme of my song, peacefully reposes the last Baron of Fortcastell, Theobaldo de Montagut, whose wonderful history I am about to write down.

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I.

The noble Countess of Montagut, on the eve of giving birth to a son, had a mysterious, terrible dream. Perchance it was a premonition from God; perchance a vain fantasy which time realised. She dreamt she nurtured at

her breast a serpent—a monstrous, loathsome thing, that hissed and crept on the ground, and which, turning from her with gleaming eyes, darted out of sight, and was lost among the briars of a thicket.

"There it goes ! there it goes !" cried the Countess, writhing under her terrible nightmare, and indicating to her maids where it had disappeared. Her maids had rushed into the chamber on hearing her cries, and found the noble lady immovable and terror-stricken ; and on looking towards the woods which she pointed out they saw a white dove rising from among the briars, flying up to the clouds. The serpent had disappeared.

## II.

Theobaldo came into the world. The mother died when her first-born saw the light ; his father perished a few years later in an ambush, fighting, like a brave man, against the enemies of God. From the moment he lost his father, the life of the heir of Fortcastell could only be compared to a violent hurricane.

Wherever he passed he left a trail of blood

and sorrow. His inferiors he put to death ; he fought his equals ; he persecuted women ; he ill-treated the monks ; and his blasphemies against the saints and holy things were frightful to hear.

### III.

One day, as was his usual custom, he went out hunting, attended by pages, archers, servants, dogs, horses, and falcons. They had not proceeded far when they were overtaken by a severe storm, and the whole of this troop of men and animals took shelter in a village church in his dominions. A venerable priest, heedless of encountering his violent wrath, and fearless of the effects of his fits of passion and impetuous character, advanced towards him, and, holding a consecrated Host in his hand, implored him, in the name of God, to quit that spot, and proceed on foot in the garb of a pilgrim to ask the Pope absolution for his sins.

“Leave me in peace, old man !” Theobaldo cried out. “Leave me in peace ; or rather, since I have not found a single boar to-day, I

will let my dogs loose, and will hunt thee down like a wild beast for my recreation."

## IV.

Theobaldo was a man of his word. The priest merely replied:

"Do what you please; but remember that there is a God Who punishes and Who pardons, and if I die at your hands will blot out my sins from the book of His indignation, and will write yours instead until you expiate your crime."

"A God Who punishes and Who pardons!" exclaimed the impious Baron, bursting into a loud peal of laughter. "I do not believe in God, and as a proof I will fulfil what I have promised you; because, though not fond of prayer, I am true to my word. Raymond! Gerard! Peter! incite the hounds, give me my spear, blow the horn; for we are going to chase this imbecile old man, even if he mounts the altars and scales the church walls."

## V.

The servants hesitated; but at a new com-

mand from their master, the pages began to unfasten the hounds that were filling the church with their barking. The Baron had already sprung his cross-bow, laughing in a Satanic manner, whilst the priest, murmuring a prayer, raised his eyes to heaven and awaited death calmly, when a fearful outcry was heard outside the church, accompanied by blowing of horns, announcing that they had started the game; and cries rose above the uproar of “The wild boar! across the brakes and brambles! to the mountains!” Theobaldo, on hearing the welcome news of sport, rushed frantically to the door, followed by his whole retinue of servants, horses, and dogs.

## VI.

“Where goes the wild boar?” the Baron asked, as he mounted his steed, bow in hand.

“By the glen at the foot of yonder hills,” was the reply.

Yet, without heeding the last words, the impetuous hunter spurred his horse and started at full gallop, the whole troop following him.

The villagers, who had been the first to raise the alarm, and who, when the terrible beast appeared, had taken refuge in their huts, timidly looked out of the windows ; and when they saw the hunter and his retinue disappear among the foliage of the woods, devoutly crossed themselves.

## VII.

Theobaldo was in advance of his troop. His charger, swifter and more severely punished than the horses of his retainers, so closely followed the prey, that several times he rose in his stirrups and sprang his bow to wound it. But the wild boar, seen only at intervals among the thick underwood, would disappear from his sight, and seem to get farther away from the range of his arrow.

And thus they ran for hours. They crossed the glen of the valley and the stony bed of the river, and entered an immense forest, where he lost his way among its dark windings, his eyes constantly fixed on his wished-for prey, ever on the point of overtaking the beast, yet always mocked by its marvellous agility.

### VIII.

At length, in a favourable moment, he raised his bow and shot an arrow, which struck the flank of the terrible animal. It gave a bound and uttered a fearful snort. “It is dead!” he cried in gleeful tone, spurring for the hundredth time the streaming flanks of his horse. “It is dead! Vainly does it attempt to fly, since a trail of blood marks its path.” Saying this, he blew his horn in sign of triumph, that his men might know he had succeeded in killing the boar.

At that moment his horse stood still, its legs trembled under him, a slight tremor shook its frame, and it fell to the ground, a stream of blood and froth flowing from its distended nostrils.

His brave charger had died of fatigue. It had fallen down exhausted and lifeless, when the distance that separated him from the boar was fast becoming shortened—when only one more effort would have sufficed to reach the beast.

## IX.

It is impossible to describe the wrath of Theobaldo. It were an impious thing to repeat his oaths and blasphemies. With loud cries he called his servitors, yet no response came—nothing but the echo of his voice was heard in those solitudes. He tore his hair, he plucked his beard, stricken by frightful desperation. “I will follow him, even if I die,” he at length exclaimed, as he once more sprang his bow, and prepared to follow his luckless prey. In that instant he heard a noise behind him; the thick foliage was opened, and a page leading a horse black as night, came forth and stood before the hunter.

Theobaldo leaped on the animal’s back, nimble as a roebuck, saying, “Heaven has sent it to me.” The page, who was thin, emaciated, and pale as death, smiled in a peculiar manner, as he gave him the bridle.

## X.

The horse gave a loud neigh, which shook the woods. He gave an incredible leap in the air, raising himself up many yards from the

ground, and the air began to whistle in the huntsman's ears, like a stone cast by a sling. The horse had started at full speed, but a speed so rapid, that Theobaldo, fearful of falling to the ground from giddiness, closed his eyes, and clung with both hands to the steed's flowing mane.

And without touching the reins, or using the spurs, or encouraging the horse with his voice, he ran without stopping. For how long Theobaldo sped without knowing whither it was carrying him—his face buffeted by the branches, the briars tearing his clothes, and the wind whistling in his ears—no one could ever tell.

## XI.

When, after some time, he took courage to open his eyes for a moment to look around him, he found himself far, very far from Montagut, and traversing a country totally unknown to him. The charger fled, fled without stopping, passing over trees, rocks, castles, and villages, like a flash of lightning. New horizons opened before his view, that became blotted out to make room for regions more

and more unknown to him. Narrow valleys, filled up with colossal fragments of granite, which the tempest had wrenched from the summits of mountains ; pleasant meadow lands, covered with an ever-green carpet, spangled with white huts and villages ; boundless deserts, covered with burning sands, calcined by the sun's rays ; vast solitudes ; immense plains ; regions of eternal snow ; gigantic rocks standing out in bold white relief against the dark grey sky ; white misty phantoms rising up and extending their arms to grasp his hair as he passed. All this, and a thousand other objects which I can not describe, did Theobaldo see in his fantastic race, until enveloped in a dense cloud, he no longer perceived the sound of the horse's hoofs.

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## I.

Noble knight, simple shepherd, beautiful maiden, who listen to my narrative, if thou dost marvel at what I tell ye, do not think that it is but a fable woven at will merely to surprise thy credulity. From mouth to mouth

has this tradition come down to me, and the legend of the tomb, which still exists in the Monastery of Montagut, stands an indubitable proof of the truth of my words.

Believe, therefore, what I have told you, and believe what yet remains to be told, because it is as true as what has been already recounted, and more marvellous than the preceding. I may perchance adorn the simple, naked skeleton of this terrible history by clothing it in poetic robes, but never in a single instance have I deviated from its acknowledged truthfulness.

## II.

When Theobaldo, unable any longer to hear the tread of his horse's hoofs, and had felt himself launched into space, he could not repress an involuntary shudder of horror convulsing his frame. Up to that moment he had judged that the objects which had passed before his view were but phantoms of his imagination troubled by pain and dizziness, and that undoubtedly the charger was running wildly, but that it ran without leaving the

limits of his seigniory. But now he had no doubt that he was the sport of a supernatural power, that dragged him on he knew not where, across those dark mists, those clouds of fantastic forms, in which, illuminated by some ray of lightning, he could distinguish the brilliant flakes of fire, ready to burst into flashes.

The charger sped on, or, rather, floated in that ocean of hot and fierce vapours, and the marvels of the heavens began to unfold themselves one by one before the astonished gaze of the horseman.

### III.

Cavalcading upon the clouds, clothed in long tunics bordered with gold, their bright hair streaming at the mercy of the hurricane, holding in their hands polished swords, which glistened and threw out sparks of lurid light, he saw the angels—ministers of God's wrath—like a mighty company, crossing on the wings of the tempest.

And he ascended higher still. He thought he could descry the stormy clouds, like a sea of

lava, and he heard the thunder rolling at his feet, like the ocean roars when it beats against the rock upon which stands the terrified traveller.

IV.

And he saw the Archangel, white and fair, like the driven snow, seated upon an immense crystal globe, which he guides in space on calm nights, like a mighty silver ship on the blue waters.

And he saw the sun, fiery, and revolving on its golden axis, in an atmosphere of beautiful tints and fire. In its focus he saw the igneous spirits that dwell among flames, and from its burning bosom chant hymns of joy to the Creator.

He saw the threads of imperceptible light which bind men to the stars. He saw the rainbow, thrown like a colossal bridge over the abyss that separates the first from the second heaven.

V.

By a mysterious ladder he saw souls descending to earth. He saw many going down, but very few returning. Each of those inno-

cent souls was accompanied by a most pure archangel, that sheltered it under the shadow of its wings. Those that were returning alone were ascending silently and with tearful eyes ; those, however, who returned accompanied by their angels, ascended singing like larks rising up on a May morning.

Then the blue and rosy-tinted mists that floated in space like transparent gauzy curtains, were rent asunder as the veil of the altar is rent on the day of glory, and the paradise of the just, in all its dazzling magnificence, was displayed before his eyes.

## VI.

He saw there the holy prophets, whose effigies you may perchance have seen rudely sculptured on the stone entrances of our cathedrals ; there radiant virgins, whom artists in vain attempt to copy from their dreams on the coloured glasses of its windows ; there he saw the cherubim in their long floating robes and golden nimbus as we see carved on the altars ; there, in conclusion, he saw the celestial hierarchy, beautiful above all exaggeration.

VII.

Beyond the paradise of the just did the spirit of Theobaldo proceed, until he became paralysed with fear, and a profound terror took possession of his soul. Eternal solitude, eternal silence reigns in those regions that lead to the mysterious sanctuary of the Lord. From time to time a gust of wind, cold like the steel blade of a dagger, passed across his brow and made his hair stand on end, and penetrated into the very marrow of his bones; gusts of wind similar to those which announced to the prophets of old the approach of the divine Spirit. At length he reached a point from whence he thought he heard a low murmur like the distant buzzing of a swarm of bees on an autumn evening, as they hover around the last flowers of summer.

VIII.

He crossed that singular region where the echoes we thought wasted away for ever had been treasured, the words we considered to have been lost in the air, and the sighs we thought no one had heard.

Here, within that harmonious circle, he found the petitions of children, the prayers of the virgins, the psalms of the holy hermits, the supplications of the humble, the chaste words of the clean of heart, the resigned plaints of those in pain, the sighs of those that suffer, and the hymns of those who hope. Theobaldo, among that murmur of voices breathing in the luminous ether, heard the tones of his saintly mother's voice, who prayed to God for him ; but he did not hear his own voice mingling with those around him.

## IX.

Farther still he went, and his ears were dinned by a discordant uproar— a thousand sounds, harsh and hoarse, blasting cries of vengeance, songs of orgies, wanton words, curses of desperation, threats of impotence, and impious, sacrilegious oaths.

Theobaldo crossed the second circle with the rapidity of a meteor that darts across the sky on a summer's evening, in order not to hear his own voice, that was vibrating in that circle, rising above the uproar in that fearful

concert, with powerful, thundering noise, as he repeated above that ocean of blasphemy, “ *I do not believe in God ! I do not believe in God !* ”

And Theobaldo began to believe.

## X.

He left those regions far behind him, and traversed others full of terrible visions, which he could not comprehend, nor I attempt to describe, until he reached the last circle of the heavenly spheres, where the seraphim adore the Lord, veiling their faces with their triple wings, and prostrated at His feet.

He wished, in his impiety, to look on God.

A breath of fire suffused his face, an ocean of light blinded his eyes, a tremendous thunder-clap resounded in his ears, and he was wrenched from the horse and dashed into space, like the burning stone is hurled from a volcano. He felt himself descending lower and lower, yet without falling: blinded, burning, and deafened, like the rebel angel fell, when God, with a mere breath of His mouth, hurled him off the pedestal of his pride.

## I.

Night had set in, and the wind sighed, agitating the leaves of the trees, through whose luxuriant foliage the soft, mellow moonlight pierced, when Theobaldo, lifting himself up, rubbed his eyes, as one who awakes from a deep sleep. He looked around him; he was in the very wood where he had wounded the wild boar and his horse had dropped down dead, and where that strange horse had been given him which had carried him into unknown, mysterious regions.

The silence of death reigned around him—a silence broken only by the far-distant lowing of deer, the tremulous murmur of the leaves, and the echo of a distant bell, which now and again was wafted to him by the gusts of wind.

“I must have been dreaming,” the Baron said, as he proceeded to cross the wood and reached the plains.

## II.

Far away, upon the rocks of Montagut, he saw the black towers of his castle rising up

in relief against the transparent blue sky of night.

“ My castle is far away, and I am tired,” he said. “ I will wait for daylight in some near habitation.” And he bent his steps to a cottage close by.

He knocked at the door.

“ Who are you ?” was asked.

“ The Baron of Fortcastell,” Theobaldo replied ; and they laughed in his face.

He called at another house.

“ Who are you, and what do you want ?”

“ I am your master,” replied the knight, surprised that he should not be recognised ; “ I am Theobaldo de Montagut.”

“ Theobaldo de Montagut !” angrily replied the woman who had opened the door, “ Theobaldo de Montagut of the fable ! . . . Bah ! . . . Go thy way, and do not come dragging honest people from their beds to tell them stupid tales !”

### III.

Theobaldo, astonished beyond measure, left the village, and wended his way to the castle,

which he reached just at day-dawn. The moat was strewed with stones from the ruined towers; the drawbridge was broken down, rotting away, but held together by its strong iron chains, covered with the rust of years; in the tower a bell was slowly tolling. Fronting the principal archway of the fortress, a cross stood upon a granite pedestal. Not a soldier was to be seen upon its ramparts. A confused, hushed sound seemed to rise up from within the building—a sound like a distant murmur, a religious hymn, grave, solemn and magnificent.

“There is no doubt this is my castle,” Theobaldo was saying, as he scanned the building from end to end with a troubled look, unable to comprehend what was passing. “That is certainly my escutcheon which is sculptured on the key-stone of the arch! This is the valley of Montagut! These lands are the seigniory of Fortcastells!”

At that moment the heavy doors slid back upon their hinges, and a religious appeared on the threshold.

IV.

“Who art thou, and what dost thou here?”  
Theobaldo asked the monk.

“I am a humble servant of God,” replied the brother, “and a religious of the Monastery of Montagut.”

“But,” the Baron rejoined, “Montagut—is it not a seigniory?”

“It was so at one time,” continued the monk, “but that was long ago. Its last master, so it is said, was carried away by the devil; and as there was no successor to the heritage, the reigning counts made a donation of these lands to the religious of our Order, who have held possession of the seigniory for some hundred and twenty years. And you, who and what are you?”

“I,” . . . stammered the Baron of Fortcastell, after a long pause—“I am . . . a miserable sinner, who, deeply repentant of his sins, has come to ask thy good abbot to admit me into his Order, that I may end my days in penance and austerity.”





## The “Miserere” of the Mountains.

**M**HEN visiting, some time since, the celebrated Abbey of Fitero, I spent some hours in turning over the books of its neglected library, and I discovered, put away in a corner, two or three quires of manuscript music, evidently of great age. They were covered with dust, and the mice had commenced to gnaw the corners. It was a “Miserere.”

I know nothing whatever of music, but I am so passionately fond of it that, although I do not understand it, I often take up the score of an opera, and spend whole hours looking over its pages, admiring the groups of notes more or less drawn together, the strokes, the semi-circles, triangles, and the different kinds of *et ceteras* which are called keys; and all this I do without being able to comprehend

a single iota, or derive any profit from perusing it.

Following my hobby, therefore, I carefully examined all the sheets; and what first attracted my attention was, that though in the last page there was the Latin word usually found in all works—*finis*—yet, in truth, the “Miserere” was not finished, because the music only reached the tenth versicle.

This circumstance was certainly the first to strike me; but after I had perused all the sheets of music, it did seem to me very singular that in place of the words in Italian, generally found in all music—such as *maestoso, allegro, ritardando, più vivo, a piacere*—there were some lines written in very small characters and in German, which indicated that such difficult things were to be done as the following:—*Crunch . . . the bones are to crunch, and from their marrow must appear to come forth the cries.* Or this one: *The chord to shriek, yet without discordance; the metal tube to thunder, but not in a deafening manner; for this reason all are to join without confusion; and all this is what is*

*humanly called sobs and sighs.* Or what was the most original of all, there was placed at the foot of the last versicle : *The notes are bones covered with flesh ; inextinguished light, the heavens and their harmonies. . . . . Strength ! strength and sweetness !*

“Do you know what this means ?” I asked a little old monk who accompanied me, after translating the words to him, and which to me seemed phrases written by a madman.

The old religious, as an answer to my queries, recounted to me the following legend, which I at once wrote down.

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I.

Many years ago, on a dark, tempestuous night, a pilgrim knocked at the door of this abbey, and asked for a little fire to dry his clothes, a piece of bread to satisfy his hunger, and a shelter in any corner until morning, when he could continue his journey.

The brother who opened the door gave up to the weary pilgrim his frugal collation, his lowly couch, and the warm hearth of his own

cell. After he had partaken of the food, and was somewhat rested, the brother interrogated the wayfarer concerning the object of his pilgrimage, and where he proposed going.

"I am a musician," replied the pilgrim. "I was born far from here, and in my country I at one time enjoyed a great reputation. In my youth I employed my art as a powerful weapon of evil, and fanned passions that dragged me to commit a crime. In my old age I wish to convert into good the gifts I employed for evil purposes."

As the enigmatical words of the pilgrim did not seem very clear to the lay brother, whose curiosity was greatly roused, he continued his questioning, and received the following reply:

"In the bottom of my heart I wept over the sin I had committed, but on wishing to ask pardon and mercy from God, I could find no words which could worthily express my repentance and sorrow. One day my eyes fell on a holy book; I opened that book, and upon one of its pages I found a mighty cry of deep contrition, a Psalm of David, the one which commences with *Miserere mei Deus*. From the

*humunly called sobs and sighs.* Or what was the most original of all, there was placed at the foot of the last versicle : *The notes are bones covered with flesh ; inextinguished light, the heavens and their harmonies. . . . . Strength ! strength and sweetness !*

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## I.

Many years ago, on a dark, tempestuous night, a pilgrim knocked at the door of this abbey, and asked for a little fire to dry his clothes, a piece of bread to satisfy his hunger, and a shelter in any corner until morning, when he could continue his journey.

The brother who opened the door gave up to the weary pilgrim his frugal collation, his lowly couch, and the warm hearth of his own

'Miserere' that could inspire me ; no, not even one, and, mark you, I have heard so many, that I can well say that I have heard them all."

"All, did you say ?" exclaimed one of the shepherds, interrupting him in his narrative.  
"Have you heard perchance, the 'Miserere' of the Mountains ?"

"The 'Miserere' of the Mountains ?" cried the musician, in a tone of surprise. "What 'Miserere' is that ?"

"Did I not say so ?" the countryman replied, as in a mysterious low tone of voice he added : "This 'Miserere' is only heard by chance by such as me, who walk about day and night watching the flocks amongst briery places and broken rocks. It is quite a history, an old one, 'tis true, but as true as it appears incredible. Upon the roughest spot of the range of mountains which encircles the valley wherein stands this abbey, many years, nay, many ages ago, there stood a famous monastery. This monastery, it appears, was built at the sole expense of a man who employed his whole wealth upon it, leaving nothing to his son,

whom he disinherited on his death-bed, on account of his evil life. All went so far well but the fact of the matter was, that this son, who, as we shall see further on, was allied to the enemy, if not Satan himself in the flesh, when he knew that his inheritance was in the hands of the monks, and that his castle had been turned into a church, gathered together some highwaymen—comrades of his in the evil life he had pursued since he had quitted his father's house—and proceeded on the night of Maundy Thursday to the church. The monks had just commenced the psalm, ‘Miserere,’ when they set fire to the monastery, sacked the church, and, it is said, put to death all the monks. After destroying everything, the robbers and their leader marched away, no one knows where to, perhaps into the bottomless abyss.

“The flames reduced the monastery to cinders; nothing remained of the church but the ruins, that are seen on the hollow rock from whence springs the cascade of water that, after leaping from rock to rock, forms the stream which flows outside the walls of this abbey.”

"But what about the 'Miserere'?" impatiently interrupted the musician.

"Patience," replied the shepherd. "It will all come in good time," and he continued his tale :

"The people of the neighbourhood were shocked at the crime committed. From father to son has this history been handed down, and recounted during the long watches of winter nights; but what more vividly keeps up the remembrance of it is that, every year, on Maundy Thursday, lights are seen shining across the broken windows of the church, and a strange weird music is heard; a doleful, melancholy chant is wafted on the winds. It is from the monks, who, perchance, died unprepared to appear before the tribunal of God, divested of all sin and blemish, and come from Purgatory to implore His mercy, singing the 'Miserere.'"

The by-standers looked at one another in an incredulous manner. The pilgrim, who appeared greatly struck with what he had heard, addressed the speaker in an agitated tone :

“And do you say that this marvel still continues to be repeated ?”

“Within three hours it will commence most certainly, because this is Holy Thursday, and the clock of the abbey has already struck the hour of eight.”

“And how far is this ruined monastery ?”

“Scarcely a league and a half,” replied the shepherd.

“But what are you about ?” “Where are you going to on such a night as this ?” “Are you bereft of your senses ?” they one and all cried out as they saw the pilgrim rise up from his bench, take his staff in hand, and quickly leave the room, making towards the door.

“Where am I going, do you ask ? To hear this marvellous music, to listen to this grand, true ‘Miserere,’ the ‘Miserere’ of those that return to the world after death, and who know what it is to die in sin.”

Saying this, he disappeared from the sight of the astonished lay brother, and the no less amazed shepherds.

The wind howled, making the doors creak on their hinges, as though a strong hand was

endeavouring to wrench them from their place ; the rain fell in torrents, splashing against the windows, and from time to time a ray of lightning illumined the horizon. After a few moments of dismay, the lay brother exclaimed, “He is mad !”

“He *is* mad !” the shepherds repeated, as they stirred the fire and gathered closer to it.

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## II.

He walked on for nearly two hours, this mysterious person who had been designated as a madman by the group before the Abbey hearth. He had bounded across the stream pointed out by the shepherd, and he reached the point where the dark imposing ruins of the monastery rose up.

The rain had ceased ; the clouds floated in dark angry masses, through the breaks of which now and then a pale ray of light would appear ; and the wind, as it beat against the massive buttresses, swept within and around the ruins, and seemed to be uttering sighs.

But nothing supernatural, nothing strange

seemed to strike upon his imagination. To him, who had slept many a night under no better shelter than the ruins of some abandoned tower or solitary castle ; to him, who had encountered hundreds of trials and discomforts in his long pilgrimage, all these noises were familiar. Drops of water filtered through the cracks of the broken arches, and fell upon the slabs beneath with measured time, like the pendulum of a clock ; the screech of the owl, hidden away behind some image still standing in the niches of the walls ; the noise of reptiles, that roused by the storm out of their lethargy, were pushing out their uncouth heads from the holes where they had lain asleep, or crept out among the briars and brambles growing at the foot of the altars, and around the sepulchral slabs that formed the pavement of the church ; all these strange, mysterious sounds of the fields, of solitude, and of night, were lost upon the ears of the pilgrim, who, seated upon the mutilated monument of a sepulchre, was anxiously awaiting the hour when he should hear and witness the marvel.

Time passed on, and nothing was heard ; those numberless confused sounds continued, but ever the same.

"Perhaps he has deceived me," thought the musician. A moment after he heard a strange noise—a noise inexplicable in that place—it was like the noise that a clock makes just before striking the hour; a noise like wheels commencing to turn round ; of things giving way ; of machinery prepared for some mysterious mechanical action, and a bell vibrated . . . once . . . twice . . . thrice . . . up to eleven strokes.

In that ruined temple, no bell, no clock, nor tower existed.

The vibration had not quite ceased ; the last expiring sounds of the hour were echoing fainter and fainter ; the vibration still trembled on the air ; the granite monuments that sheltered the sculpture ; the marble steps of the altars, the cornice stones, the carved fret-work of the choir, the festoons of clover in the cornices, the black buttresses of the walls, the vaults, the whole church itself, seemed to become suddenly illumined, without a torch

being seen, or a taper, or a lamp, to produce and pour down that unusual light.

It was like the phosphorescent light emitted by a skeleton from its yellow bones, shining in the obscurity of night. It was a blue light, timid and flickering.

All things appeared to be taking form and life; but with a galvanic movement such as electricity works on a corpse, a contraction that parodies life, an instantaneous movement, more horrible than the stillness of death, moved by its unearthly force.

Stones joined themselves to other stones; the altar—the ruined fragments of which were strewed about in disorder—rose up intact and perfect, as though in that moment it had received the last touch of the artificer’s chisel; and along with the altar rose up also the ruined chapels, the broken capitals, and the destroyed crowd of arches, that crossed and interlaced each other in a fantastic manner, their columns and pilasters forming a labyrinth of porphyry.

The temple had been rebuilt. Then a distant sound began to be heard like the sighing

of the winds, but which was the sound of many voices mingled together, far distant and solemn, yet which seemed to be rising from the depths of earth, and which every moment increased in power, and became more distinct.

The daring pilgrim began to feel terrified ; but his enthusiasm for all that was unusual and marvellous overcame his fear, and after a few moments of wrestling with his terror, he quitted the tomb upon which he sat, and approached the brink of the abyss, from whence issued the cascade of water that leaped among the broken rocks with an incessant, fearful noise, and he stood there terror-stricken.

Scantly covered with the torn remnants of their religious habits ; their hoods drawn over their foreheads, strangely contrasting under their folds the fleshless jaws and white teeth with the dark cavities of the eyes in their skulls, he saw the skeletons of the monks who had been cast from the battlements of the church, down that fearful precipice, rising up from the depths of the waters, clinging with

the long fingers of their bony hands to the cracks of the rocks, repeating in a low, sepulchral voice, yet with a heartrending expression of sorrow, the first versicle of the Psalm of David :

*"Miserere mei Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam Tuam!"*

When the spectral monks reached the entrance of the church, they ranged themselves into two lines and entered the choir, where they all knelt down, and in a more solemn, higher-toned voice, continued chanting the verses of the psalm. Music in harmony with their voices pealed throughout the church. That music was the distant rolling of thunder, which, after the storm, was murmuring as it faded far away ; it was the surging of the winds that sighed in the hollow of the rocky mountain ; it was the monotonous noise of the cascade of water as it fell on the rocks ; the dripping of water percolating the fissures ; the screech of the concealed owl ; and the trailing sound of the disturbed reptiles. All these sounds composed that music, and something more perfectly indescribable, and which can

scarcely be conceived ; a something more, that seemed like the echo of an organ accompaniment to the versicles of the mighty hymn of contrition of the Psalmist King, with notes and chords as gigantic as its terrible words.

The service continued ; the musician who stood there a silent witness, spell-bound and terror-stricken, thought he was no longer in a world of reality, but dwelling in that fantastic region of dreams, where all things are clothed in strange phenomenal forms.

A fearful agitation swept over him, and wrenched him from that stupor that held down all the powers of his spirit. His nerves shivered under the impulse of a strong emotion, his teeth chattered with a tremor he was powerless to restrain, and a cold, icy feeling penetrated into the marrow of his bones.

The monks were pronouncing at that moment those startling words of the "Miserere" :

"*In iniquitatibus conceptus sum, et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.*"

When this versicle was repeated, its tones were echoed from vault to vault, and a tremendous cry rose up like a shriek of pain,

wrenched from the whole of humanity under the consciousness of its evil; a fearful cry, composed of all the plaints of unhappiness, of all the howlings of desperation, of all the blasphemies of impiety; a monstrous concert, a fit interpretation of the wickedness of those who live in sin and were conceived in iniquity.

The chanting continued, now sad and deep, now like to a ray of sunshine breaking across the dark clouds of a storm, a ray of joy succeeding a flash of terror, until a sudden transformation took place, when the whole church became bathed in celestial light. The dry bones of the monks became covered with flesh, a bright halo of glory shone around their brows, the vaulted dome of the church burst asunder, and the heavens were seen opened, like an ocean of light spread before the gaze of the just.

Seraphim, archangels, angels, and their various hierarchies, were joining their voices in a hymn of glory to the verse which then rose up to the throne of the Lord, like a harmonious flood, like a mighty spiral of sonorous incense :

*“Auditui meo dabis gaudium et lætitiam,  
et exultabunt ossa humiliata.”*

At that moment the dazzling light blinded the pilgrim's eyes, his temples throbbed violently, his ears tingled, and he fell senseless to the ground, and heard no more.

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### III.

The following day the peaceful monks of the Abbey of Fitero, whom the lay brother had apprised of the extraordinary visitor of the previous night, saw this unknown pilgrim enter their door; he was pale as death, and looked as though his reason had left him.

“Well, did you hear the ‘Miserere’?” the lay brother asked him in an ironical tone, at the same time giving a knowing wink to the Superior.

“Yes, I have,” replied the musician.

“And what do you think of it?”

“I am going to write it down,” he said, and turning to the Abbot, added: “Give me an asylum in this house, and bread for several months, and I will leave you an immortal work of art, a ‘Miserere’ that will blot out

my sins in the eyes of God, make my name celebrated for all time, and eternize the memory of the Abbey."

The monks, wishing to see what he would compose, begged the Abbot to grant him what he asked, and the Abbot, from motives of compassion, believing the man to be out of his mind, acceded to his wishes, and the musician at once commenced his work.

Night and day he laboured at his music with restless, unceasing efforts. At times, when engaged at his task, he would appear to be listening to something that resounded in his mind; his eyes would open wide and wildly, and he would leap up from his seat, exclaiming: "That is it; yes, thus . . . thus . . . yes, there is no doubt it was thus." And he would continue writing down notes with feverish rapidity—a rapidity that was often a marvel to the monks, who, unobserved by him, were watching him.

He wrote the first versicles, and continued as far as the middle of the psalm; but when he reached to the last verse which he had heard on the mountains, he found it impossible to proceed.

He wrote one, two, nay, hundreds of sheets, all to no purpose. The music was not to be compared with what he had already noted down, and which he had heard on that terrible night. Sleep fled from his eyelids, he lost his appetite, fever took possession of his weary head, his reason forsook him, and he died without being able to finish his "Miserere," which the monks preserved after his death, and even to this day is kept in the archives of the Abbey as a wondrous thing.

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When the little old monk finished his narrative, I could not help turning my eyes towards the ancient, dusty manuscript of the "Miserere," which still lay open on the table.

"*In peccatis concepit me mater mea,*" were the words that caught my eye as I looked on the open page before me, and which seemed to mock me with its notes, its keys and hieroglyphics, unintelligible to those unlearned in music.

I would have given the world then to be able to read and comprehend that composition. Yet who knows if, after all, it was nothing more than a madman's ravings?



## Three Reminiscences.

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**N**a portfolio which I still have by me, full of sketches and notes taken during semi-artistic excursions in the city of Toledo, there are three particular events noted down which I will individualize.

The events that occasioned these three episodes might in a certain sense be called insignificant, but notwithstanding the insignificance of their origin, these reminiscences have served to amuse me during many long, sleepless nights, each one forming a romance more or less sentimental or solemn, according as my imagination found itself more or less excited, and prone to cheerful or terrible ideas.

If on the morning following one of these

extravagant nocturnal ravings, I had been able to write down the strange episodes of impossible histories which I had conjured up before closing my eyelids ; episodes which unfolded vaguely and floated in an undecided manner during the moments when wakefulness was slowly merging into sleep, I might certainly have composed a romance extravagant indeed, yet truly original, and perhaps interesting.

But this is far from what I purpose doing, because those light fancies, or, rather, impalpable ones, are, in a certain sense, like butterflies, which cannot be caught by the hand without destroying that fine golden dust of their wings, and which forms their attractiveness. I shall therefore limit myself simply to narrate briefly the three events, which generally serve as the epigraph to the chapters of my dreamed novels ; the three isolated points which I unite in my mind by a series of ideas like a beam of light ; the three themes upon which I make thousands of variations, and which might justly be called absurd symphonies of the imagination.

## I.

There is in Toledo a narrow, crooked, dark street, that so faithfully preserves the footprints of the hundred generations which have successively inhabited it, which speaks so eloquently to the eye of the artist, and reveals to him so many secret points of affinity between the ideas and customs of each age with those of a former one ; its special characteristics imprinted in its most insignificant objects, that I would close its entrances with an iron barrier, and place above the barrier a huge tablet, with the following inscription :

“ In the name of all poets and artists, in the name of those that dream and those that study, it is hereby forbidden to civilization to touch a single stone with its prosaic, destructive hand.”

A massive archway, with a covered passage above, forms the entrance at one end of the street. In its key-stone is seen a scutcheon, broken and worm-eaten by age, overgrown with ivy which, moved by the winds, waves fantastically above the crest of the arms,

like a tuft of feathers on the casque of the helmet.

Under the vaulted archway, and fixed to the wall, is seen a picture with its canvas so blackened, as to render it impossible to trace the subject of the painting. A gilt frame surrounds it, and a lantern hangs before it, with votive offerings of wax tapers.

Passing this arch, which shadows the street, and gives it a tint of mystery and indescribable sadness, are two rows of houses, one on either side; houses uneven and peculiar, each one of a different form and shape, colour, and dimension. Some are built of rough, uneven stones, bereft of any ornamentation except a roughly-carved blazon over the doorway; others are built of brick and mortar, and possess Arab arches, which serve for ingress and egress, two or three low windows opening from a creviced wall, and with a mirador terminating in a high weather vane. Others there are which belong to no recognised order of architecture, and which have, notwithstanding, a vestige of each order, the whole forming a model of a singular and well-known style, or a curious

pattern of the extravagancies of an artistic period.

Some have a wooden balcony with an uncouth roof, others a Gothic window recently whitewashed, and the sill full of pots of flowers. Further on, some have picturesque encaustic tiles around the door-frames, enormous nails in the panels of the heavy wooden doors, and with two bodies of columns which perchance were brought from a Moorish alcazar, and inserted in the wall.

The palace of some magnate turned into a common courtyard; the house of a Faki inhabited by a canon of the Church; a Jewish synagogue transformed into a Christian oratory; a convent raised upon the ruins of an Arab mosque, of which a tower still remains; a thousand foreign picturesque contrasts—hundreds of curious remnants of diverse races, civilizations, and epochs, epitomized, so to say, within a few hundred yards of ground.

Behold all that is found in this street! a street constructed during many centuries, a narrow, dark, uncouth street with endless turnings, and where each owner, on raising his

dwelling, would take a projecting point, leave a corner, or form an angle to please his taste, without consulting the laws of architecture either in height or regularity : a street rich in deficiency of calculated combination of lines, possessing a veritable wealth of capricious details, and so many and such accidents, that it offered at each turning some new phase to the student or the artist.

When I visited Toledo for the first time, I was engaged sketching San Juan de los Reyes, and had to pass this street from end to end every evening on my return from the convent to the Fonda, at which, under the name of hotel, I had taken up my quarters.

In crossing this street I rarely met a living being, and nothing broke the silence of the spot but the noise of my own footsteps, never so much as seeing behind the lattices of a balcony, the wicket of a door, or the grating of a barred window, the wrinkled brow of an inquisitive old woman, or the large lustrous black eyes of a Toledan damsel. At times it seemed to me that I wandered through a deserted city, which had been abandoned at some

remote period by its inhabitants. One evening, however, on passing one of the dark mansions from the walls of which some windows of unequal size projected, my eyes chanced to become fixed upon one of them. This window was oval and arched, surrounded by a sharply-defined wreath of leaves sculptured on stone. The arch had been recently filled up by some light masonry-work, and a small window placed in the centre; the frame and grating were painted green; on the sill was a pot of blue campanulas which trailed among the granite-work; the panes of glass exquisitely clean, and a dainty white curtain hung behind them.

The window itself was sufficiently interesting to attract notice, on account of its character; but what most contributed to rivet my attention was that, on turning round to look at it, the white curtain was raised for a moment, and then as quickly put down again, thus hiding the eyes of some one who at that moment must have been watching me.

I continued my walk, my mind pre-occupied with the window, or rather the little curtain, or perhaps more probably with the woman

who undoubtedly had raised the curtain; for a window so white, green, and poetic, so garlanded with flowers, could only belong to a woman, and when I say a woman, I presupposed a young and pretty one.

Next evening I passed that way again. I pressed my heels on the pavement, breaking the silence of the street with my noisy tread, which was echoed from end to end. I looked up at the window as I passed, and the curtain was raised once more. The simple truth was, that I had really seen no one behind the curtain, but my imagination suggested a form, in effect a woman's form. My mind often wandered whilst busily sketching. I passed that window again and again, and each time the little curtain would be drawn aside, or raised up, and remain so until my steps had died away in the distance, when I would turn my eyes to give one last look.

My sketches advanced but slowly. Within the Convent of San Juan de los Reyes, in that cloister so mysterious and bathed in a melancholy light, seated on the broken capital of a column, my drawing-book on my knees, my

elbow resting upon it, and my face buried between my hands, lulled by the sound of the rippling water of the fountain with its incessant murmur, the noise of the leaves rustling, moved by the twilight breeze in its wild, deserted garden—oh ! how much must I have dreamed about that window and the woman behind it ! I felt I knew her, that I already knew her name, and even the colour of her eyes.

I saw her in my day-dreams crossing the wide, solitary halls of that ancient mansion, filling all things with joy, as the sun gilds ruins. At other times I seemed to see her walking in a garden which was enclosed by very high dark walls, wandering among huge old trees, which in imagination I saw within the enclosure of that Gothic palace wherein she dwelt ; culling flowers, and when seated on some stone bench, sighing softly as she tore their petals one by one. Oh, how many dreams, how much nonsense, how much poetry did that window awaken in my soul during my stay in Toledo !

But time speeds on, and I must leave the

city. I packed up all my papers and sketches, and with a sad, heavy heart, I bade farewell to my world of chimeras and started for Madrid.

Before altogether losing sight of the high towers of Toledo, I drew my head out of the carriage-windows to gaze once more upon the city, and then I remembered that street. My sketch-book was under my arm, and seating myself again, I drew out a pencil, and whilst we rounded the hill which suddenly shuts out the city from view, I noted down the date of that day. It is the first of the three reminiscences, and which I called the "Episode of the Window."

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## II.

I had occasion some few months after to again visit Toledo for a few days. I dusted my portfolio, took a handful of pencils, some sheets of paper, a few napoleons, and started. Once installed in this historic city, I commenced to visit anew the different places which had most interested me on my former visit, also a few others which I only knew by name.

In this way I spent the little time I had for my short artistic excursion, taking long solitary walks among its most ancient suburbs, finding a veritable pleasure in losing myself in that confused labyrinth of lanes, narrow streets, dark passages, and impracticable heights.

One evening—the last I was to spend in Toledo—after one of these long excursions in search of the unknown, I know not what street I took, nor can I explain how I came to it, but I reached a plaza deserted, and seemingly forgotten by the inhabitants of that city, situated in a far-distant corner of its neighbourhood. Rubbish and broken things of all descriptions had evidently been cast there from time immemorial, and had become identified, so to say, with the ground itself in such a manner, that it offered the rugged mountain aspect of a miniature Switzerland. On all sides, and between the breaks in the undulating ground, grew at will marsh-mallows of colossal proportions, gigantic nettles, clusters of white creeping convolvulus, dark mossy grass and evergreens, whilst here and there among the dwarf grass, towering like monarchs among

parasites, grew the yellow marigold, the true flower of deserts and ruins.

Strewed about on the ground, half buried, and well-nigh hidden from view by the tall weeds, were an infinite variety of fragments of a thousand diverse things, broken and thrown there at different times, forming layers upon layers, from which it would have been easy to follow a course of historic genealogy. Moorish tiles of varied colours, fragments of marble and jasper columns, broken bricks of different makes, huge square stone blocks covered with moss, splinters of wood nearly reduced to dust, remains of antique vaulted ceilings, shreds of fabric, strips of leather, and many other objects, nameless and shapeless, thrown on the surface ; and what also attracted my attention were thousands of sparks, which seemed to shoot from among the rubbish like diamonds cast about by handfuls, but which on closer inspection proved to be nothing more than small pieces of glass, broken cups and plates, which reflected back the sun's rays, and appeared like a sea of microscopic dazzling stars.

The paving of that plaza was formed of tiny

stones of varied colours forming a pattern, whilst in several places were large slate slabs, though the largest portion was, as we have described, like a garden of parasites, or a wild uncultivated lawn.

The buildings which surrounded this plaza in an irregular form were no less peculiar and worthy of study. One side was enclosed by a row of small, dark cottages with roofs culminating in weather-cocks, their balconies flat and narrow, the tiny window-sills full of pots of flowers and lanterns covered with wire gauze, as a protection against the stones thrown at them by boys.

On the opposite side stood a dark wall, full of crevices and cracks, in some of which were seen reptiles protruding their heads, their small, bright eyes twinkling among the moss and parasites growing upon that wall. This wall was very high, and formed by immense square blocks of stone, with openings for doors, and balconies which had been filled up with stones and mortar, one extremity joining and forming an angle with a brick wall, broken and covered with projecting square stones dyed

red, green, and yellow in equal distances, and finished at the top by a layer of mud and hay, among which were seen stems of creeping plants. This, however, was no more than the framework of the singular decoration which on entering that plaza had suddenly presented itself to view, captivating my spirit, and keeping it enthralled for some time: for the culminating object of this panorama, the building which gave all this the general tone, rose up at the farther end of the plaza more fantastic, more original, infinitely more beautiful in its artistic disorder than all else which towered around it. "Behold here what I have so long wished to find!" I exclaimed as I seated myself on a stone, placed the sketch-book on my knees, trimmed my pencil, and commenced at once to sketch it—a slight attempt indeed to portray its irregularity, its fantastic outline, which I desired to preserve as a remembrance.

Were I able to affix here the slight imperfect sketch which I have by me, I would save myself a multitude of words, and would give my readers a more proximate idea of it than by any word description I could write; but as that

cannot be done, I shall endeavour to depict it to the best of my ability, in order that when reading these lines, some remote idea may be conveyed to the mind, if not of its infinite details, at least of the collective whole.

Imagine to yourself an Arab palace, with its doors horse-shoe-shaped, its walls beautified with long rows of arches, crossing and interlacing each other over and over again, along a band of brilliantly-coloured encaustic tiles; here, an opening showing a bow-window, divided by aërial columns, and covered by a framework of minute, fantastic, open filigree-work; beyond rises a watch-tower with its lofty graceful mirador, roofed over by glazed tiles, its sharp golden weather-vane lost in space; farther on is descried the cupola that surmounts a chamber painted blue and gold, the lofty galleries shaded by green venetian blinds, which, on being drawn up, allow the garden to be seen, with its rows of myrtles, thickets of laurel-bushes, and the high jets of water rising from its fountains.

All things were original, everything in harmony, although in disorder; all things reveal-

ing the wealth of marvellous beauty of the interior, and suggestive of the customs and character of its founders.

The wealthy Arab who owned this building at length forsook it. The slow action of time commenced to crumble its walls, to tarnish the brilliant colouring, to worm-eat the very marble itself.

A Castilian monarch chose this palace, thus abandoned and crumbling, for his residence, and ordered a corner to be taken down, an archway to be opened, and adorned it with a row of escutcheons, among which in time the ivy and other creepers twined around. Later on, he raised a massive stone tower with narrow slits and pointed turrets. By the side of another tower he constructed a wing with dark lofty apartments, in which were seen on one side remnants of bright inlaid work, on the other dark pilasters, or a solitary Moorish bow-window, or an arch, light and chaste, that led to a Gothic saloon, severe or imposing.

But the day came when even this monarch abandoned that place, and it was given up to a religious community, and these

again built, and added to it some other super-addition to the already quaint appearance of the Moorish alcazar. They enclosed the windows with lattices; between two Arab arches they affixed the device of their order sculptured in granite; and where in former times grew the tamarind and the laurel, they planted melancholy dark cypresses, and with the broken ruins lying about, they built rooms over others still standing, forming the most picturesque and extravagant combination imaginable.

Over the doorway of the church—wherein are seen, as though enveloped in the mysterious twilight which bathes the shades under its arches, rows of saints, angels, and virgins, at whose feet turn, among thistles and briars, the sculptured forms of reptiles, monsters and dragons—rises an elegant filigree balcony worked with Moorish ingenuity. Close to the loopholes in the enormous thick walls, upon which watch-towers once stood, they placed pictures, and filled up the open places with square partitions studded with small holes, which resemble chess-boards. Upon the

pointed columns they placed crosses, and lastly they built a spire and belfry for their bells, which in a melancholy tone, day and night, were ever calling to prayer; bells swung by some invisible hand, bells, the distant sounds of which drew from the eyes tears of involuntary sadness.

Years passed on, subduing the whole with a soft dark colouring, harmonising its tints and making the ivy to spring out from every crevice and crack.

The storks made their nests in the weather-vane of the tower, the martinet built beneath the eaves of the roofs, the swallows under the granite vaults, and the owls chose for their haunts the high stony broken walls, from whence on dark nights they frightened credulous old cronies and trembling children, with the phosphoric resplendency of their round eyes and their peculiar sharp screech.

All these revolutions, all these particular circumstances, yielded but one result—an edifice as original, as full of contrasts, of poetry, and abounding in recollections, as the one which offered itself on that evening to my

sight, and which I have vainly endeavoured to portray in words.

I had already traced its outline on the page of my sketch-book. The sun scarcely gilded the highest points of the city, the twilight breeze was commencing to fan my brow, when, absorbed in the thoughts that suddenly swept over me on contemplating those silent vestiges of past ages, which were far more poetic than the material one in which we live immersed in pure prose, I allowed my pencil to fall to the ground, put away my drawing, and leaning back against the wall I gave myself up completely to the dreams of my imagination. What were my thoughts? I know not whether I shall be able to tell them. I distinctly saw the different epochs pass before me—I saw the walls crumbling down, and others built in their place. I saw men, or rather women, leaving to make room for other women, the first and those that followed them turned into dust and scattered about, their beauty carried in a gust of wind; that beauty which had wrenched from hearts so many secret sighs, that had engendered passions, or

red, green, and yellow in equal distances, and finished at the top by a layer of mud and hay, among which were seen stems of creeping plants. This, however, was no more than the framework of the singular decoration which on entering that plaza had suddenly presented itself to view, captivating my spirit, and keeping it enthralled for some time: for the culminating object of this panorama, the building which gave all this the general tone, rose up at the farther end of the plaza more fantastic, more original, infinitely more beautiful in its artistic disorder than all else which towered around it. "Behold here what I have so long wished to find!" I exclaimed as I seated myself on a stone, placed the sketch-book on my knees, trimmed my pencil, and commenced at once to sketch it—a slight attempt indeed to portray its irregularity, its fantastic outline, which I desired to preserve as a remembrance.

Were I able to affix here the slight imperfect sketch which I have by me, I would save myself a multitude of words, and would give my readers a more proximate idea of it than by any word description I could write; but as that

cannot be done, I shall endeavour to depict it to the best of my ability, in order that when reading these lines, some remote idea may be conveyed to the mind, if not of its infinite details, at least of the collective whole.

Imagine to yourself an Arab palace, with its doors horse-shoe-shaped, its walls beautified with long rows of arches, crossing and interlacing each other over and over again, along a band of brilliantly-coloured encaustic tiles; here, an opening showing a bow-window, divided by aerial columns, and covered by a framework of minute, fantastic, open filigree-work; beyond rises a watch-tower with its lofty graceful mirador, roofed over by glazed tiles, its sharp golden weather-vane lost in space; farther on is descried the cupola that surmounts a chamber painted blue and gold, the lofty galleries shaded by green venetian blinds, which, on being drawn up, allow the garden to be seen, with its rows of myrtles, thickets of laurel-bushes, and the high jets of water rising from its fountains.

All things were original, everything in harmony, although in disorder; all things reveal-

ing the wealth of marvellous beauty of the interior, and suggestive of the customs and character of its founders.

The wealthy Arab who owned this building at length forsook it. The slow action of time commenced to crumble its walls, to tarnish the brilliant colouring, to worm-eat the very marble itself.

A Castilian monarch chose this palace, thus abandoned and crumbling, for his residence, and ordered a corner to be taken down, an archway to be opened, and adorned it with a row of escutcheons, among which in time the ivy and other creepers twined around. Later on, he raised a massive stone tower with narrow slits and pointed turrets. By the side of another tower he constructed a wing with dark lofty apartments, in which were seen on one side remnants of bright inlaid work, on the other dark pilasters, or a solitary Moorish bow-window, or an arch, light and chaste, that led to a Gothic saloon, severe or imposing.

But the day came when even this monarch abandoned that place, and it was given up to a religious community, and these

again built, and added to it some other super-addition to the already quaint appearance of the Moorish alcazar. They enclosed the windows with lattices; between two Arab arches they affixed the device of their order sculptured in granite; and where in former times grew the tamarind and the laurel, they planted melancholy dark cypresses, and with the broken ruins lying about, they built rooms over others still standing, forming the most picturesque and extravagant combination imaginable.

Over the doorway of the church—wherein are seen, as though enveloped in the mysterious twilight which bathes the shades under its arches, rows of saints, angels, and virgins, at whose feet turn, among thistles and briars, the sculptured forms of reptiles, monsters and dragons—rises an elegant filigree balcony worked with Moorish ingenuity. Close to the loopholes in the enormous thick walls, upon which watch-towers once stood, they placed pictures, and filled up the open places with square partitions studded with small holes, which resemble chess-boards. Upon the

pointed columns they placed crosses, and lastly they built a spire and belfry for their bells, which in a melancholy tone, day and night, were ever calling to prayer; bells swung by some invisible hand, bells, the distant sounds of which drew from the eyes tears of involuntary sadness.

Years passed on, subduing the whole with a soft dark colouring, harmonising its tints and making the ivy to spring out from every crevice and crack.

The storks made their nests in the weather-vane of the tower, the martinet built beneath the eaves of the roofs, the swallows under the granite vaults, and the owls chose for their haunts the high stony broken walls, from whence on dark nights they frightened credulous old cronies and trembling children, with the phosphoric resplendency of their round eyes and their peculiar sharp screech.

All these revolutions, all these particular circumstances, yielded but one result—an edifice as original, as full of contrasts, of poetry, and abounding in recollections, as the one which offered itself on that evening to my

sight, and which I have vainly endeavoured to portray in words.

I had already traced its outline on the page of my sketch-book. The sun scarcely gilded the highest points of the city, the twilight breeze was commencing to fan my brow, when, absorbed in the thoughts that suddenly swept over me on contemplating those silent vestiges of past ages, which were far more poetic than the material one in which we live immersed in pure prose, I allowed my pencil to fall to the ground, put away my drawing, and leaning back against the wall I gave myself up completely to the dreams of my imagination. What were my thoughts? I know not whether I shall be able to tell them. I distinctly saw the different epochs pass before me—I saw the walls crumbling down, and others built in their place. I saw men, or rather women, leaving to make room for other women, the first and those that followed them turned into dust and scattered about, their beauty carried in a gust of wind; that beauty which had wrench'd from hearts so many secret sighs, that had engendered passions, or

had been a well-spring of pleasures : then . . . what can I tell . . . all is confusion. . . . I saw many things tossed together—boudoirs covered with lace, and walls of stucco floating in clouds of perfumes, and couches of flowers ; narrow dark cells with a kneeling chair and a crucifix, at the foot of the crucifix an open book, and upon this book a death's head ; grand saloons tapestried and adorned with trophies of war, many women walking about crossing and re-crossing each other before my eyes ; tall nuns, pale and emaciated ; haughty brunettes with carmine lips and jet black eyes ; matrons of noble pure profile, of lofty brow, and majestic gait.

All these things did I see, and many more rose up in thought and became lost in the mind, things so ethereal that they were impossible to enclose in the narrow circle of words, when I suddenly leapt up from my seat, and passed my hand across my eyes, to convince myself that I was not dreaming. I rose up like one moved by a nervous impulse, and my eyes became fixed upon one of the high miradors of the convent. I had seen clearly a

fair white hand drawn out of one of the apertures which appeared like a chess-board, and beckoning several times, as though saluting me with a dumb loving sign. Undoubtedly it was saluting me, for I was alone, completely alone in that plaza.

Vainly did I wait there without moving until far in the night, my eyes riveted on that spot; vainly did I return many times to my seat on the dark stone from whence I had seen that mysterious hand, the object of my dreams by night, and delirium by day. I never saw it again. . . . And the hour arrived when I must needs quit Toledo, leaving behind me, like heavy useless lumber, all the illusions which it had given rise to. Once more I packed up my portfolio with a sigh, but before putting it away I wrote down another date—the second one, which I call the *episode of the hand*. On writing it down, I looked for a moment at the former one, that of the window, and I could not refrain from smiling at my own nonsense.

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## III.

From the time when this strange adventure took place until my return to Toledo, nearly a year had elapsed, during which time these reminiscences would often come to my mind, at first at all hours and times, and with every detail; then less frequently, and at last in such a vague confused manner, that I would sometimes think I had been the sport of an illusion or of a dream.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, scarcely had I reached the city which has so justly been called the Rome of Spain, than the whole scene flashed before me vividly and strongly, and, full of its memories, I sallied out to traverse the streets without any definite idea, without a preconceived intention of visiting any particular spot.

The day was heavy, oppressed with that peculiar sadness which seems to fill all things, and pervades all that is heard, seen, or felt. The sky was of a leaden hue, and by its melancholy dull light, the buildings appeared more ancient, more peculiar and darker than

hitherto. The winds whistled and moaned through the narrow crooked streets, bringing in the gusts sounds like stray notes of some mysterious symphony, at one time like unintelligible words, at others like the clangour of bells, or echoes of deep, far-distant strokes. The atmosphere was cold and damp, and seemed to freeze the marrow with its glacial breath.

For several hours did I walk through the outskirts of the city, and through its most lonely and deserted places, my mind absorbed in a thousand confused ideas; and contrary to my usual custom, gazing with abstracted looks into space, without having my attention attracted by any particular fantastic order of architecture, or any monument of an unknown style, nor by any of the hidden marvellous works of art, and objects, which on former occasions had demanded at every step a minute examination, when my mind was solely occupied with ideas of art and of historic recollections.

The sky, which was overcast, became more and more dark and dreary; the wind whistled

with greater strength and noise, and some drops of rain, or rather melted snow, began to fall, a small penetrating rain, when I suddenly found myself, without knowing how, or by what road I had taken, and as though impelled by an irresistible impulse, which was mysteriously carrying me towards the spot which dwelt in my thoughts in the solitary plaza which I have already described to my readers.

When I found myself in that place, I emerged from the species of lethargy which had taken possession of me, as though I had been violently awakened from a deep sleep. I cast a glance around me. All things were exactly as I had left them. I say wrong, all things looked more desolate. I know not whether it was the darkness of the sky, the want of greenness, or the state of my mind which was the cause of this sadness; but the truth of the matter is that the feelings which I experienced when I gazed for the first time upon this place, and the ones which now so impressed me, were full of melancholy and bitterness.

I gazed for some time upon the dark convent,

in that moment rising before my eyes more darksome than ever, and was preparing to quit it, when my ears caught the sound of a bell, a cracked bell which was slowly tolling, whilst a little one began suddenly to ring so sharply and rapidly that it seemed as though it had been stricken by a sudden pain.

Nothing was more fantastic than that building, the black turrets of which stood out against the sky like a rock bristling with thousand fantastic peaks, speaking as it were with the bronzed tongues of bells, which seemed to move, impelled by invisible beings; the one sounded as though weeping and sobbing, the other laughing with the sharp, ringing laughter of a demented woman.

At intervals, and mingled with the deafening noise of the bells, I thought I heard confused notes as though from an organ, and the singing of a solemn religious hymn. I changed my mind, and instead of quitting the spot, I proceeded towards the door of the church, and asked one of the beggars sitting on the steps what was going on in the church.

"Some one is being professed," replied the

poor woman, kissing the coin I had put in her hand. I had never witnessed the ceremony of the profession of a nun, and I had never seen the interior of this convent church. Both these reasons induced me to enter.

The church was lofty and dark; the nave was formed of two rows of slender columns resting upon a wide octagonal base, and the rich crown of capitals divided the arch stones of the massive vaults or ogives. The high-altar was placed at the end under a cupola in the renaissance style of architecture, full of colossal angels bearing shields, griffins ending in simulated leafing, moulded cornices, large golden flower work of elegant and fantastic designs. Around the nave were a number of dark chapels, within which lamps were burning, looking like lost stars on a dark night. These chapels were of Arab and Gothic order of architecture, and some were enclosed by magnificent iron gratings, others with lowly wooden railings; some hidden in the darkness by an ancient marble tomb placed before the altar; others again profusely illuminated and containing some image of a saint clothed in dazzling

robes and surrounded by votive offerings of silver and wax fastened with ribbons of varied colours.

The fantastic light which illumined the church contributed to cast a more mysterious character over the whole, in complete harmony with the mingled artistic disorder of the rest of the convent. From the silver and bronze lamps which pended from the vaulted roofs, from the torches on the altar, and from the narrow windows of the walls, came rays of divers-coloured light: white rays from the outside light poured in through the small skylights of the cupola: red from the rays that the altar-lights emitted, and many coloured from the brightly-painted glass windows. All these reflections, that were insufficient to dispel the gloom which pervaded the sacred building, seemed to be wrestling with each other.

Notwithstanding the religious ceremony that was taking place within, the number of spectators was limited. The service, which had commenced some time previously, was nearly concluded. The celebrant priests at the high-

altar were descending the carpeted steps of the sanctuary, enveloped in a cloud of incense that was slowly dispersing, and were proceeding towards the choir where the nuns were chanting a psalm. I bent my steps also towards the spot with the object of peering through the double grating which separates the choir from the church. I know not why, but it seemed to me that I should recognise among the religious the woman who had put out her hand for a moment, although I had not seen her face. I opened wide my eyes as though wishful of imparting to them greater light and power, and fixed them on the farther end of the choir. A vain attempt, for across those closely-grated bars very little, or rather nothing, could be seen. Like to white and black phantoms moving in the dim light of a few tapers, rose up a long line of stalls, high and pointed, shaded over with canopies, beneath which could be guessed, veiled by the obscurity, the forms of nuns clothed in long trailing habits. A silver crucifix lighted up by four candles, poured soft rays upon the darksome picture like those beams of light which, in a picture

by Rembrandt, makes the shadows more palpable, and was all that I could distinguish from whence I stood.

The priests, robed in their choir copes embroidered with gold, were proceeding towards the grating of the choir. They were preceded by acolytes bearing a silver processional cross and two torches, others who swayed the censers filling the air with perfume. As the procession wended its way through the congregation, the people knelt and kissed the borders of the robes of the priests. Up to that moment I had been unable to distinguish among the shadowed forms which one was the virgin who on that day was consecrating herself to the service of God.

Reader, have you never seen in the last rays of twilight ere the night closes in, rising from the water of a river, from the surface of a marsh, from the waves of the sea, or from the profound depths of a chasm in the mountains, a shred of mist that floats in space, and alternately resembles a woman moving, whilst her robes fly behind her, or the white veil fastened to the brow of some invisible sylph, or now

like a phantom rising in the air covering its dry yellow bones in a corpse-cloth, through which is traced its angular form? An hallucination similar to this did I experience when I beheld advancing towards the grating, and as though struggling to divest herself of the dark shadows that enveloped the farther end of the choir; a white figure, tall and lightsome.

Her face could not be seen. She placed herself exactly in front of the lighted candles and the crucifix. The reflection from the candles formed a nimbus of light around her head, and made her figure stand out in relief against the gloom of the shadows. A deep silence reigned: every eye was fixed upon her, and then commenced the last part of the ceremony. The abbess murmured some unintelligible words. These words were repeated by the priests in a low solemn voice. The abbess then removed the wreath of flowers that encircled her brow and threw it far from her . . . poor flowers! the last which that woman was ever to wear! and she, the "Sister of the Flowers." Then she took off her veil, and her golden hair fell down like a

rippling cascade over her neck and shoulders, where it remained but for one moment, for a sharp crisp sound was heard in the midst of the silence—a metallic sound that palsied the nerves, and her beautiful tresses fell to the ground severed by the scissors! The abbess once more murmured some words which were again repeated by the priests, and all things lapsed into silence. Only a sound like long wailing sighs was heard in the distance. It was the wind that swept and surged in the angles of the towers and turrets, and which shuddered as it passed the coloured glass of the windows.

She remained immovable and pale like a sculptured stone virgin wrenched from a Gothic cloister. And they despoiled her of the jewels which covered her arms and throat, and they divested her of her nuptial robes, of that mantle that seemed to have been made for a lover with trembling loving hands to unclasp. . . . The mystic bridegroom was awaiting the bride . . . where? Farther . . . beyond the portals of death . . . doubtlessly raising the slab of the grave, and bidding her come

and pass its bounds, like the timid bride passes the threshold of the sanctuary of nuptial love, because she fell senseless to the ground like a corpse. The nuns cast over her prostrate form handfuls of flowers, chanting meanwhile a sad psalmody : a murmur rose from the crowd, and the priests in deep low tones commenced the dirge for the dead, accompanied by wailing notes from the organ that increased the fear which the terrible words of themselves inspire. “*De profundis clamavi ad te!*” the nuns were chanting from within the choir, in sad plaintive voices.

“*Dies iræ, dies illa!*” the priests responded with deep, thundering echoes, whilst the bells slowly tolled a death-knell, and from their bronze tongues gave out a strange lugubrious hissing.

I was deeply touched ; no, not touched, but terrified. I thought I was witnessing something supernatural. I felt as though something was being wrenched from me which was necessary for life, and that space was widening around me ; it seemed to me I had lost something—a father a mother, or a beloved wife,

and I experienced that immense void which death leaves behind whenever it passes ; a discomfort which baffles description, and cannot be portrayed, and which can only be conceived by those who have felt it.

I was still riveted to that spot. My eyes wandered. Trembling and beside myself I saw the new religious raise herself from the ground. The abbess then clothed her in the habit ; the nuns took lighted candles in their hands, ranged themselves in two lines, and conducted her in procession towards the end of the choir.

There, among the distant shadows, I saw a gleam of light shining ; it was the cloister door that had been opened. On placing her foot on the threshold, the new religious turned her head to cast a last look upon the altar. The united light from all the lamps and candles lit up her face for a moment, and I was able to see her countenance. When I looked at her I was obliged to stifle a cry. I knew that woman. I had never seen her before, but I knew her as the ideal image of my dreams. She was one of those beings that the soul

divines, or are memories of another better world, from whence, on descending into this one, some do not lose altogether the recollections. I stepped forward—I wished to call her—I tried to cry out, but in that instant the cloister door was closed—for ever !

The bells began to ring, the priest sang *Hosanna !* clouds of incense rose up, the organ pealed forth a torrent of harmony through its hundred metal tubes, and the Tower bells commenced to peal in a furious manner.

That mad, noisy joy set my hair on end. I turned round seeking the parents, the family of that woman. I found none.

“ Perchance thou wert alone in the world,” I said, unable to suppress a tear.

“ May God grant in the cloister the happiness which the world denies thee !” exclaimed a little old woman by my side, who cried and sobbed as she clung to the grating.

“ Did you know her ?” I asked.

“ Yes, poor thing, I did know her, ever since she was born, and I nursed her in my arms.”

“ And why does she become a nun ?”

“ Because she was alone in the world. Both

her parents died on the same day from cholera. The Dean, seeing her an orphan and destitute, gave her the dowry for her profession; and, you see, what else could she do?"

"Who was she?" I asked.

"She was the daughter of the administrator of the Count de C—, whom I served until his death."

"Where did she live?"

When I heard the name of the street I could not restrain a movement of surprise. A beam of light, which flashes quickly like a thought, and shines in the darkness and confusion of the mind, and yet unites the most distant points, joining them together in a marvellous manner, had brought together my vague recollections, and I comprehended it all, or at least I thought I had done so.

\* \* \* \* \*

The event of this day I did not note down, and give it a particular name, as I had done the former ones. I did not write it anywhere. I say wrong—I carry it written in a spot unknown to men—in a spot where no one can

read it, and from whence it will never be effaced.

At times, when bringing to mind these events, even at this very day as I am writing them here, I have said to myself: "Some day, in the mysterious twilight hour, when the sighs carried in the spring breezes, tepid and laden with fragrance, enter into the most hidden retreats of the mind, wafting in, as it were, the remembrances of the world—alone, lost in the dim shades of a Gothic cloister, my head resting on my hands, and my elbows on the sill of one of its narrow windows, will some woman have heard a sigh, when the memories of these recollections shall have crossed my imagination?"

*Quien sabe?*

Oh! if she has sighed, where has that sigh gone to?





## A Legend of Italy.

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**F**HE valiant Ariulfo, Duke of Lombardy, had defeated the Romans in Umbria, and the conquering armies were encamped upon the very spot where the battle had been fought. The soldiers were singing songs in honour of Albion, who had been the first to lead that powerful people into Italy, and also in praise of the heroes who on that day had distinguished themselves. And their songs ran in this wise :

“ Promptly we came ; arduously fought the armies on either side. Do you see the bravest among the brave ? It is our Duke : he is ever the leader in the combat. He it is who has conquered ; he the hero of heroes, the king of the camp !”

When Ariulfo heard this, he shook his head and said :

“Odin help me” (Ariulfo knew no other oath, for he was a pagan)—“Odin help me if I can affirm the truth of this song. I certainly have fought, but the palm of victory should not be awarded to me.”

Then he turned to the captains who surrounded the camp fire, and demanded of them who had been the brave conqueror of that day.

The experienced warriors looked at each other and held a consultation. They then unanimously declared that the chant of the soldiers was correct, and that it was Ariulfo who on that eventful day had proved himself the bravest and most valiant of warriors.

Ariulfo again shook his head, and pensively gazed into the camp fire. After a few moments he exclaimed :

“Ah, knights of Lombardy ! never should I have thought that you would so far forget your customs and German manners, as to give a vote of honour impelled more by human respect than from a love of truth.”

The knights were greatly offended at these words, and retorted.

“ My lord, never have we done such a thing, and as you cannot prove your assertion, you must withdraw your words.”

Ariulfo, with a grave, placid countenance, looked around him and said :

“ Can it be possible that none of you have seen the elegant youth who has continually been guiding me in the combat, marching before me, and with his golden shield has stayed all the blows which were directed towards me ? I should have thought his white battle horse would have shone before the crowd like the moon shines clear and bright amid the dark shades of night ! As long as I live I shall never forget his noble presence, nor his fair curls which, from beneath his helmet, fell upon his shoulders, notwithstanding that he was equipped more like a pilgrim than a warrior. The inspired look of his eyes will never be effaced from my memory, as he at times would turn upon me his pure and youthful brow, urging me to advance on occasions when it seemed impossible to follow his quick movements ;

and I tell you in truth, that it was my sense of shame more than my own courage which impelled me to follow. Who can tell me who was this young and noble warrior that I may gratefully accord him the victorious palm of the combat, and beseech him to remain in future ever at my side? and I shall honour him as a younger brother indeed, but as one superior to me in efforts."

But no one could give him the desired information, and he vainly sent emissaries to all the different encampments, for his guide had disappeared. The march therefore had to be continued without the presence of the one whom Ariulfo proclaimed to be the "pearl of the army."

As the soldiers reached the outskirts of Espolet, they announced their victory with the sound of trumpets: all the people sallied out to meet them with green boughs in their hands, and songs of welcome on their lips, because the people in those days preferred the honoured mild rule of the Germans to the despotic sway of the Romans.

When the armies passed under the groves

of orange-trees in full blossom, their lofty plumes shook the branches and the scented flowers fell like a shower upon their burnished helmets. Suddenly they perceived a splendid building before them, its proud arches and high towers rising to the blue sky, and moreover they distinctly saw its superb doors wide open.

"This edifice," said Ariulfo, "is evidently intended as a halting-place for the whole world, because one has hardly perceived it, but an irresistible impulse is felt to enter within its walls."

"You are right, brave knight," replied one of the Christian warrior knights of his suite, "yet in a different sense, because the whole universe is invited to enter and enjoy the sweetest repose and the most unalterable felicity possible in this life. This is a church—a temple raised to the memory, and in honour of a great servant of God and a martyr to the faith—Sabine. His sacred remains rest in this church, and when Christians are threatened by an invasion of the enemy, they come to his shrine to implore his intercession."

Ariulfo burst out laughing, and retorted : " I had always heard that you Christians were a singular people, and now I am convinced of it. So you think that a dead man can be of use in your combats ? But in order to be perfectly convinced of such extravagant notions I shall enter your church."

The Duke dismounted, and ascended the steps of the church, laughing derisively ; but when he entered and found himself under its lofty arches, which terminated in a resplendent altar, from the tabernacle of which the adorable Saviour and Redeemer looked upon His redeemed sons, Ariulfo was silenced and broke off his laughter. Silently, and with measured step, he walked round the temple, examining most attentively all the beautiful statues of the glorious servants of God, which were placed upon the different altars.

Suddenly he stops, and remains in mute contemplation before the image of a youth depicted upon a blue and gold shield, and, as it were, moved by an impulse of astonishment, Ariulfo crosses his hands in an attitude of prayer. He summons one of the Christian

knights of his retinue, and demands of him the name of that beautiful young man, for he has recognised in that portrait his long-sought guide, who had marched before him in his combats, and who was robed in the identical dress and armour.

“This is the image,” replied the knight, “of the venerated patron of this church, the holy Martyr Sabine.”

The Duke remained with crossed hands, gazing steadfastly and thoughtfully upon that image of the glorious martyr, and at length he said, “I am not worthy to remain here,” and silently left the House of God.

Under the grove of orange trees he called together his knights. “Brave comrades, I have found the guide of the combat; it is the one whose remains are interred in that church, and who bore the name of Sabine, whom I impiously laughed at; but this will not occur again, for I affirm, on the word of a knight, and I confide upon him who was such an heroic helper, that he will not prove an irreconcilable enemy with one who was a blinded

offender, as I truly was when I laughed in scorn."

The Christian knights clanked their arms in token of joy, and assured their captain that the Saint most assuredly had pardoned him.

"No," replied Ariulfo, "he should not yet forgive me, but still be my guide to show me the good road for conquering and triumphing over the errors of paganism. I desire to hear daily the words of the true God, and be instructed in His doctrine and the science of the saints, then will I hope to destroy and drive far from my sight all idols and false deities in the same manner as Sabine knew how to conquer and disperse the Romans.

The Duke performed what he had said. Soon after obtaining the gift of faith he returned to the church of S. Sabine to receive the holy rite of baptism, where, full of joy and holy satisfaction, he uttered these words: "*The Golden Shield of Sabine has been to me like the sun : and his spirit a valiant guide leading me on to victory.*"



## The Gnomes of Moncayo.

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**T**HE village damsels were returning from the fountain with pitchers on their heads. They were singing and laughing noisily, which in the distance sounded like the cheerful chattering of a flock of swallows as they toss and turn around the weather-vane of a belfry, thick as hailstones.

At the foot of a juniper-tree, which stood close to the church porch, sat Uncle Gregory. He was the oldest man in the village, for he was nearly ninety years of age; his hair was as white as snow, yet his eyes were bright, and a smile ever hovered around his lips. When a child, he had been a shepherd, in his youth a soldier; when his parents died he cultivated a small piece of land, which he in-

herited from them ; and at length, when his strength failed him, he quietly sat down to await death, which he neither feared nor wished for. No one could tell a tale more charmingly than he, nor recount more stupendous histories, nor quote more to the point a proverb, a sentence, or a saying.

When the girls saw him, they hastened towards him, crowding around, and beseeching him to tell them a story that would while away the time before nightfall, which would not belong coming, for the setting sun was shedding its horizontal rays over the ground, and the shadows of the mountains were lengthening on the plains.

“ I will not recount a story, because, although I can call to mind many, yet they contain such grave things, that a pack of restless children like you would pay no heed to them, nor would I, in the late hour of the day, have time to tell you. I will, however, give you instead a bit of advice.”

“ Advice !” cried out the girls, pouting and ill-pleased. “ Bah ! it is not to hear advice we left our pitchers. When we want advice the Padre Cura will give it to us.”

"But the fact of the matter is this," the old man rejoined, "that the Padre Cura on this occasion could not give you such opportune advice as Uncle Gregory, because he, occupied as he is with his prayers and litanies, may not have perceived as I have, that every day you go to the fountain for water earlier in the day and return later."

The girls looked at each other, smiling derisively, and some of them who stood behind the old man, pointed to their foreheads with a significant gesture.

"And, pray, what harm if we do linger at the fountain chatting with friends and neighbours?" replied one of the girls. "Perchance is there any gossip going on in the place, because the lads come out on the road to cast flowers at our feet, or help us to carry our pitchers as far as the town."

"There is a little of all things," the old man said. "The old women complain that girls in our days go to amuse themselves, and play in a spot where they in their young days used to approach quickly and return trembling. Moreover, I think it is wrong of you to lose

by degrees the fear it inspires, because it may come to pass that you will some day be overtaken by the night whilst still lingering there."

Uncle Gregory pronounced these last words in such a mysterious tone, that the girls opened wide their eyes, and in a bantering manner, in which curiosity was largely mingled, asked him :

"The night ? And what passes there at night-time that seems to astonish and frighten you so, that you talk to us in such a tone ? Will the wolves eat us up ?"

"When the Moncayo becomes covered with snow, the wolves descend in packs into the plains, and often have they been heard howling in fearful concert, not only around the fountain itself, but they even come to the streets of the village ; but wolves are not the dwellers of the Moncayo which are most to be dreaded ; in its deep chasms, upon its rugged, lonely summits, within its hollow caves, dwell some diabolical spirits, that come down its slopes at night like a horde, and fill the cavities, and cover the plains, and leap from rock to rock, playing on the waters, or swinging themselves from the bare branches of trees. It is they

that howl in the fissures of the cliffs ; it is they who form the immense snowballs which roll down from the highest peaks, and that destroy and carry everything before them ; it is they that come down with the hailstones and knock at our windows on rainy nights, and that run like swift blue flames over the surface of our marshes. Among these spirits which have taken refuge in the inaccessible crests of the mountains are some of different natures, and that appear to take various forms. However, the ones most to be dreaded and dangerous are those which insinuate themselves into the hearts of the young with sweet words, and dazzle them with magnificent promises. These are called Gnomes. They live in the depths of the earth, they know all its subterranean passages, and, as guardians of the treasures it encloses, they watch day and night close to the veins of metals and precious stones.

“Do you see,” the old man continued, pointing with his staff to the summit of Moncayo, its gigantic darksome heights standing out in bold relief against the violet, misty, twilight sky—“do you see that immense crest still covered

with snow? Well, in its bosom dwell these evil spirits. The palace they reside in is both horrible and magnificent. Many years ago a shepherd, when following a strayed sheep, entered into one of their caves, the entrance of which is concealed by dense underwood and briars, and its depths no one had ever been able to penetrate. When he returned he was pale as death—he had unawares come upon the secret haunts of the Gnomes, he had breathed its poisoned atmosphere, and he paid for his hardiness with his life; but before he died he recounted stupendous things.

“Wandering in that cavern, he had found some immense subterranean galleries, illumined by a dull fitful light, produced by the phosphorescence of the rocks, which were like large pieces of congealed crystals, and of strange fantastic shapes. The floor, the vaults, and the walls of those extensive saloons, the work of Nature, seemed inlaid with the richest marbles; but the veins that crossed each other were of gold and silver, and among these brilliant veins were seen, as though encrusted, multitudes of precious stones of all sizes and

colours. Jacinths and emeralds were there seen in heaps, mingled with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, and I know not what else ; many kinds of jewels, the names of which he could not tell, but which were so large and beautiful, that his eyes became dazzled with their brilliancy. No external sound was heard but the long wailing sighs of the wind as it swept through that charmed labyrinth, a confused noise of subterranean fire blazing in a compressed manner, and the rippling of water passing no one knew where.

"The shepherd, alone and lost in that immense solitude, wandered about many hours without finding an egress, until at length he came to the point where the water he heard rippling sprang from. This spring rose up from the ground like a marvellous fountain, casting up a jet of water which fell light and frothy, forming a beautiful cascade, and producing a sonorous noise, as it glided away among the breaks and fissures of the rocks. Around him were plants never before seen, some wide and thick-leaved, others thin and long, like floating ribbons. Half concealed

among this damp luxuriance wandered strange beings, half man, half animal, or both in one, as, constantly changing, they at one time appeared human creatures deformed and small, at others luminous and salamandrine, or like swiftly-passing flames, leaped in circles above the crest of the jet of water.

" Then he saw moving in all directions, running about the floor of the cave, dwarfish forms, repugnant and hideous, scaling the walls, and wriggling about like reptiles : or dancing under the appearance of fatuous fire on the surface of the water, sped the Gnomes, masters of that place, counting and turning over their fabulous wealth.

" It is these Gnomes who know where the miser hoards the treasure which his heirs in vain seek. They know the spot where the Moors, before their flight, had concealed their jewels ; the trinkets that are lost, the monies mislaid, all valuables that disappear. It is the Gnomes who seek for all these things, and which they conceal in their lairs, because they know how to walk through the whole universe underground, and traverse secret and unknown

paths. In that place they had heaped up together all kinds of rare, beautiful objects : jewels of priceless value, necklaces and strings of pearls and the finest stones, golden vases of antique shapes full of rubies ; filagree cups, jewelled weapons, coins with figures and inscriptions impossible to decipher or describe ; in a word, treasures of such value, and in such heaps, that it was inconceivable to imagine. All these things were shining together, casting brilliant reflections and coloured sparks of fire, that it seemed as though the whole was blazing, moving, and trembling. At least, so the shepherd said it appeared to him."

The old man paused for a moment. The girls, who at first had listened with an ironical smile to his narrative, were all now with open mouths, distended eyelids, curiosity and interest written on their countenances, awaiting him to continue. One of them at length broke the silence, and, unable to contain herself after hearing the recital of all this fabulous wealth laid before the shepherd's eyes, exclaimed :

" And did he bring nothing away with him ? "

" Nothing," replied Uncle Gregory.

"How foolish!" cried all the girls together.

"Heaven assisted him at that moment," continued the old man; "when avarice was driving away all his fear, and when dazzled by the sight of those jewels, one of which would have sufficed to make him wealthy, the shepherd was about to take some, he says he heard—oh, marvellous thing!—he heard clearly and distinctly in that vast depth, and above the loud laughter and cries of the Gnomes, the hissing of the fire, the murmur of the running water, and the sighing of the winds—he heard, I say, as though he were standing at the foot of the hill whereupon is erected the chapel, he heard the bell of the Hermitage of 'Our Lady of Moncayo' ringing the *Angelus*.

"On hearing the bell he fell to the ground, invoking the Mother of God, and, without knowing how, he found himself away from that spot, and lying across the footpath on the road leading to the town, stupefied, as though he had just awakened from a heavy sleep.

"Since then it has been clearly explained to all the world the reason why the water of the fountain at times has fine gold-dust floating

on the surface, and why confused words are heard at night mingled with the noise of the water, deceitful words that the Gnomes mix with it at the spring, and with which they endeavour to seduce the unwary listener who indiscreetly takes heed of these words that promise them riches and treasures, which are sure to be a curse to them."

Uncle Gregory had reached to this point of his narrative when the bells began to ring for prayers, and the night had already set in. The girls crossed themselves, and in a low voice repeated an *Ave Maria*, then bidding Uncle Gregory good-night, who advised them once more not to lose their time at the fountain, each took up her pitcher and silently departed. When they were some distance from the little old man, and had reached the cross-road where they must separate, one of the most daring of the girls exclaimed: "Do any of you believe in the silly nonsense that Uncle Gregory has been telling us?"

"I do not for one," cried all the girls together, laughing at their own credulity of the moment.

The group separated, and each went her way home. Two of the girls, who, pre-occupied with their own thoughts upon the marvellous narrative of Uncle Gregory, had not spoken, then turned the corner of a narrow dark lane, and walked in silence. The eldest appeared to be about twenty years of age, the youngest barely sixteen: the first was called **Martha**, and the younger **Magdalena**. When they reached their dwelling and had put down their pitchers, **Martha** said to **Magdalena**: “Do you believe in the marvels of Moncayo, and in the spirits of the fountain?”

“I believe it all,” simply replied **Magdalena**; “do you doubt it?”

“Oh no,” quickly answered **Martha**; “I also believe in everything . . . that I wish to believe.”

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## II.

**Martha** and **Magdalena** were sisters. From their earliest years when they had been left orphans, they had lived a wretched life with a relation of their mother, who had taken

them in through charity, and who made them feel their dependence by humbling words and taunts. All things would seem to contribute to unite closely the two sisters in the bonds of love, not only by reason of their relationship, but by the mutual bonds of misery and suffering ; yet a latent emulation existed between Martha and Magdalena, a secret antipathy which could only be explained by the study of their characters as dissimilar as their types.

Martha was haughty, vehement in her inclinations, and almost fierce in the expression of her affections : she was never seen to weep or laugh. Magdalena, on the contrary, was humble, loving, kind, and often was she seen laughing and crying at the same time, like a child.

Martha had eyes black as night, and through her thick eyelashes sparks of fire would shoot like red-hot coals.

The blue eyes of Magdalena appeared to swim in azure light within the circle of her golden eyelashes. All things were in harmony with the diverse expression of their eyes. Martha was spare, dark-skinned, agile ;

her crisp black hair, which shaded her brow, fell down her shoulders like a velvet mantle, and formed a singular contrast to Magdalena, fair, rosy, small, nay almost infantile in countenance and form, with an auburn band of hair encircling her brow, like the golden nimbus on an angel's head.

They shared no common sentiments; they never confided to each other their joys or sorrows. Alike in wretchedness, misery and sorrow, Martha had shut herself up within her own heart to suffer in haughty selfish silence, whilst Magdalena, finding her sister's heart unsympathetic and dry, would retire to weep bitterly in solitude.

Close to the village, upon a height which commanded a view of the suburbs, stood an ancient castle, abandoned by its owners. The old women of the villages would recount on long winter nights marvellous stories about its founders. They would tell how a certain king of Aragon becoming impoverished through long wars against his enemies, was forsaken by his people, and nearly cast from his throne. One day a little shepherdess of that

land suddenly appeared before the king, and after informing him of some underground passages in that land, through which he could cross the Moncayo unknown to his enemies. She gave him a large quantity of the finest pearls, costly precious stones, and bars of gold and silver, by which means the king was able to pay his soldiers, raise a powerful army, and after crossing through these subterranean passages he on the following day surprised his enemies, and drove them away, thus securing the crown on his head.

It is said that after he obtained this signal victory the king summoned the little shepherdess, and said to her: "Ask me whatever thou willest, even if it were half my kingdom, and I promise to give it to thee."

"I want nothing more but to return to my flocks," replied the little damsel.

"Thou shalt not tend thy flocks, but thou shalt guard my frontiers," rejoined the king. And he bestowed upon her the seigniory of all the territory, and commanded a stronghold to be built on the frontiers of Castile, wherein he placed the little shepherdess, whom he

gave in marriage to one of his favourites, a noble, gallant, brave man, and who himself was lord of much land and of several strong-holds.

The wonderful narrative of Uncle Gregory concerning the Gnomes of Moncayo, and their secrets, whispered in the rippling waters of the village fountain, coupled with the improbable story of the treasures found by the little shepherdess of the fable, newly excited the thoughtless fancies of the sisters, and they spent a sleepless night pondering over their hopes of finding such marvellous treasures.

On the following day, at the accustomed hour, Magdalena took her pitcher, and said to her sister: "Let us go to the fountain." Martha made no reply, and she once more said: "Are we going to the fountain? If we do not make haste, the sun will set before we return."

After a few moments' silence Martha replied in a rough brusque tone: "I do not care to go to-day."

"Nor I either," rejoined Magdalena after a pause, during which she kept her eyes fixed

on her sister, as though endeavouring to find out the reason of her resolve.

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### III.

The village girls had returned from the fountain nearly an hour. The last rays of the setting sun had disappeared from the horizon, the twilight was fast merging into night, and darkness had begun to cast its pall over all things, when Martha and Magdalena, secretly avoiding each other, both started by different roads towards the mysterious fountain.

The spring leaped up from among some craggy rocks covered with moss at the bottom of a long grove of trees. When the different noises of day were becoming hushed one by one, and no longer was heard the distant echo of the labourers, who after their day's work return home like knights of the yoke, singing in concert with the measured tread of the oxen dragging the ploughs over the ground ; when the monotonous tinkling of the cattle-bell, the voices of the shepherds, the barking of the dogs collecting together the strayed

flocks, had all lapsed into silence, and the church-bell had rung the last call for prayers, the twofold solemn silence of night and solitude reigned supreme, a silence full of peculiar light murmuring sounds that made solitude more perceptible.

Martha and Magdalena wandered among the labyrinth of trees, and, protected by the darkness of night, reached the end of the grove without meeting each other. Martha, who knew not what fear was, stepped firmly, whilst Magdalena trembled at the mere sound produced by her light tread over the dry leaves that covered the ground. When the sisters came close to the fountain, the night-wind began to agitate the tops of the poplars, and the whispering of the breeze seemed to be answered by the spring with measured time and rippling noise.

Martha and Magdalena listened attentively to those sounds, uttered beneath their feet in a constant purl and above their heads like a wail rising and falling, and sweeping through the wooded glen. By degrees, as the hours sped on, that continued murmur of the air

and water began to work upon their minds a peculiar excitation, a species of vertigo that blinded their eyes and tingled their ears, and which completely perplexed them. Then, in the same manner as we hear speaking when dozing, and it sounds like a confused distant echo, did they seem to be hearing inarticulate sounds, like those of a babe endeavouring to call its mother; then followed words which were repeated now and again, yet always the same; after this, unconnected sentences, without order or sense . . . lastly, the wind began to speak as it swept among the trees, with the water leaping from rock to rock.

And they spoke thus :

#### THE WATER.

Woman! . . . woman! . . . listen . . . listen to me, and approach to hear me. I will kiss thy feet whilst I tremblingly copy thy image in the dark depths of my undulating waves. Woman! . . . listen to me, for my murmurings are words.

#### THE WIND.

¶ Maiden! . . . Gentle maiden, upraise thy

head ; let me softly kiss thy brow whilst I agitate thy tresses. Gentle maiden, listen to me, for I also know how to speak, and I will whisper to thee loving words.

**MARTHA.**

Oh, speak ! speak ! for I will understand thee. My mind is in a whirl of pain, like your undecided words. Speak, mysterious stream.

**MAGDALENA.**

I feel afraid. O night breeze, fragrant air, come and cool my heated brow ! Tell me something that may inspire courage into me, because my spirit is weak.

**THE WATER.**

I have traversed the darksome womb of earth, I have gleaned the secret of its marvellous fecundity, and I know the phenomenon of its depths, wherein future creations are germinating. The murmur of my rippling both soothes and awakens; awake thou, who dost comprehend.

**THE WIND.**

I am the wind which the angels move with

their mighty wings when they cross space. It is I that gather together the clouds in the West, which surround the sun like a purple mantle; and at day-dawn I bring the mists that melt away into dew, and fall like a shower of pearls over the flowers. My sighs are like soothing balsam. Open thy heart to me, and I will inundate it with happiness.

MARTHA.

When for the first time I heard the murmur of a stream no wonder that I bent down my ear to the earth. Along with it flowed a mystery which I desired to know.

MAGDALENA.

Sighing wind! I know thee well; thou didst soothe me in my childhood when tired from weeping I would fall asleep, and thy whispering seemed to me like the words of a mother when she rocks her child to sleep.

The water was silent for some moments, and only gave out sounds like a waterfall among the broken rocks. The wind was also hushed,

and its noise was no more than that of dry leaves rustling. After some time had elapsed they commenced to speak again, and they said:

#### THE WATER.

After filtering drop by drop across a vein of gold in an inexhaustible mine—after coursing through a silver bed, and leaping over sapphires and amethysts as though they were pebbles, and dragging with me, instead of sand, diamonds and rubies, I have united myself in a mysterious manner with a genius. Enriched with its power, and the hidden virtues of precious stones and metals with which I come full, I can offer thee whatever thou canst desire. I have the strength of a sorcerer, the power of a talisman, and the united virtue of the seven stones and the seven colours.

#### THE WIND.

I have returned from wandering over the plains, and like the bee that returns to the hive heavily laden with a wealth of perfumed honey, I have brought the sighs of maidens, the prayers of little ones, words of chaste love, and the fragrance of spikenard and wild

lilies. I have culled nought in my journeys, but perfumes and melodious echoes; my treasures are immaterial, but they shed peace of soul, and the lulling happiness of sweet dreams.

Whilst Martha was leaning over the brim of the fountain as though attracted by a spell, in order to listen, her sister was instinctively retiring from among the broken rocks from whence sprang the water.

Both had their eyes fixed on an object—the one was looking down into the depths of the water; the other, with upraised eyes, was gazing into the blue vaulted heavens. And Magdalena, as she gazed at the bright stars on-high, was saying, "Those are the nimbus of light of the invisible angels that watch and guard us." Martha, whilst she saw in the water the reflection of the stars, exclaimed, "These are the particles of gold which the water brings down in its mysterious course."

The wind and the water, that had become silent for the second time, now began once more to speak.

## THE WATER.

Ascend my current, divest thyself of thy fears as thou wouldest of a coarse robe, and leap over the bounds of the unknown. I have divined that thy spirit possesseth the essence of superior spirits. Envy perchance cast thee from heaven to envelop thee in miserable clay. But, notwithstanding, I see in thy shaded brow the seal of greatness that makes thee worthy of us, strong free spirits. . . . Come, I shall teach thee magic words of such great virtue, that on pronouncing them the rocks will be rent asunder, and diamonds be offered thee, which are hidden in their bosom like pearls in the shells which fishermen bring up from the depths of the sea. Come, and I will give thee treasures which will enable thee to live happily and in comfort; and, later on, when the prison shall be broken open which holds thee, thy spirit will become like ours, and all joined together we shall form the motive force, the vital ray of creation that circulates like a fluid through its subterranean arteries.

## THE WIND.

The water trails upon the earth and lives in the mud. I wander through ethereal regions and fly in limitless space. Follow the movements of thy heart, let thy soul rise up like the flame and the blue spirals of smoke. Unhappy the being who, having wings, descends into the deep seeking gold, when able to mount the heights and there find love and felicity.

Live thou concealed like the lowly violet, and I will bring thee in a fecund kiss the vivifying germ of another sister flower, and I will rend the misty veils that a ray of sunshine may not be wanting to light up thy joy. Live obscurely, live unknown, that when thy spirit breaks its prison bonds I may waft thee upon a red cloud into the region of light.

The wind and the water became silent, and the Gnome appeared.

The Gnome was a little dwarfish man, almost transparent, and luminous like a fatuous fire, who laughed, and leaped from rock to rock, and turned about so quickly and un-

ceasingly that it made one's sight dizzy to follow his movements. At times he would jump into the water, where he would shine at the bottom like a jewel of many colours; at others, he would rise to the surface, moving his feet and hands and turning his head rapidly from one side to the other in a marvellous manner.

Martha saw the Gnome, and her fascinated eyes followed all his extravagant gestures and evolutions, and when this evil spirit at length dashed away among the rugged fastnesses of the Moncayo like a swift-running flame, moving its head and emitting sparks of fire from its every hair, she felt a species of irresistible attraction, and sped after him in frenzied pursuit.

"Magdalena!" the wind meanwhile was calling out, as it slowly retired, and Magdalena followed step by step, like a Somnambula that is guided in her trance by a friendly voice, the soft gust of wind that was sighing over the plains.

Then all things in that dark grove lapsed into a profound silence, and the wind and the

water continued as ever their unceasing murmur and sighing.

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#### IV.

Magdalena returned home pale and amazed. They waited in vain all night for Martha.

When the village damsels on the following day went to the spring with their pitchers for water, they found a broken pitcher on the brim of the fountain. It was Martha's, of whom nothing was ever again heard or seen. Since then the village girls go for water so early in the morning that they rise with the sun. I have been assured by many persons that on many occasions during the night wailings and cries have been heard. These cries proceed from Martha, whose spirit dwells imprisoned in the fountain. I know not what credit to give this last part of the story, because the fact of the matter is this, that no one has ever dared since that day to venture into the thicket, where the spring of water rises, after the Angelus bell has sounded its last vibration.





## The Passion Flower.

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**E**N one of the darkest lanes of the imperial city of Toledo, nearly hidden between the high Moorish tower of an ancient Muzarabe village, and the dark emblazoned walls of an antiquated princely mansion, dwelt many years ago, in a miserable and nearly ruined cabin, a Jew called Daniel Levi. This Jew was vindictive and spiteful, and beyond everything, deceitful and hypocritical, and although possessed of immense wealth, according to the belief of the people, yet he was to be seen the whole day crouching at his door, mending and making chains, repairing old belts and broken harness, and driving a brisk trade among the mountebanks of Zocodover, the sellers of second-hand goods of the Postigo and impoverished knights.

An implacable hater of Christians, and of everything that belonged to them, yet he never passed one of the principal residents of the place, or a canon of the Metropolitan Church, without removing a score of times the greasy old cap which covered his bald yellow head, and whenever any of his customers would approach his shop, he would be received with an humble cringing welcome and flattering smiles.

The smile of Daniel had become proverbial throughout Toledo ; and his meekness, proof against the heaviest practical jokes played upon him, and the scorn and derisive laughter of his neighbours, knew no limits.. In vain did the boys throw stones at his hut to vex him, in vain did the pages and even the guards of the neighbouring palace endeavour to annoy him by calling him opprobrious names, or devout old women on their way to the church make the sign of the Cross when passing his door, as though they beheld Satan in the flesh ; Daniel was always smiling with an indescribably strange expression on his face. His thin sunken lips would dilate be-

neath the shade of his immense nose curved like the beak of an eaglet, and although from his small green eyes, nearly concealed by long, thick, heavy brows, a spark of ill-repressed anger would shoot, yet he would continue impassively hammering the anvil where he straightened the thousand rusty trifles which seemingly had no relation with what constituted his traffic.

Over the door of the Jew's cabin, within a framework of encaustic tiles of bright colours, opened an Arab window, a remnant of the ancient constructions of the Toledan Moors. Around the trelliswork of this little bow-window and twining around the little marble pillar which divided the window, rose up from the inside of the apartment one of those creeping plants which thrive and grow luxuriantly over the blackened broken walls of ruined buildings. Within the only part of the house which received a dull light from the narrow panes of that window, the one window which opened out into the moss-covered creviced wall of the lane, dwelt Sara, the much-loved daughter of Daniel.

When the neighbours on passing the Jew's shop would catch a glimpse of Sara behind the lattices of her Moorish window, and see Daniel bending over his anvil, they would exclaim in audible tones, admiring the perfections of this Hebrew damsel : " Who would think that such a mean old wretch could have such a beautiful daughter ? " For, in truth, Sara was a perfect prodigy of beauty. Her eyes were large, shaded by thick long black eyelashes, and from them darted rays of light like brilliant stars on a dark night. Her fiery rosy lips seemed deftly cut out from the petals of some rare purple flower by the invisible hands of a houri. Her complexion was fair, pale and transparent, like the alabaster statue of a sepulchre. She scarcely numbered sixteen years, yet upon her brow was already engraved that sweet melancholy which characterises a precocious intelligence, and her bosom swelled, and sighs escaped her lips which announced the vague awakenings of inspirations.

The highest and proudest Jews of the city, charmed with her marvellous beauty, had be-

sought her hand in marriage, but this Hebrew maid turned a deaf ear to the solicitations of her admirers, and also to the counsels of her father, who urged her to choose a companion ere she should be left alone in the world ; and she preserved a deep silence without ascribing any other motive for her inexplicable conduct than the simple caprice of wishing to remain free.

One day, an admirer of Sara, weary of enduring her repulses, and suspecting that her continued sadness was a certain proof that her heart harboured some important secret, came to Daniel, and said :

“ Do you know, Daniel, that there is a good deal of ill-natured talking going on about your daughter ? ”

The Jew lifted up his eyes from the anvil, ceased his hammering, and without betraying the slightest emotion, asked his interlocutor :

“ And what do they say of her ? ”

“ They say,” he replied ; “ they say . . . I know not . . . many things . . . amongst others, that your daughter is in love with a Christian . . . ”

When the repulsed admirer of Sara pronounced these words, he stopped short in order to see what effect his words had on Daniel.

Daniel raised his eyes for a moment and fixed them upon his interlocutor's face without uttering a word, then lowered them to continue his work, and said :

" Who says that this is not calumny ? "

" One who has seen them conversing more than once in this very lane whilst you assisted at the secret *Sanhedrim* of our Rabbins," insisted the young Hebrew, surprised that his suspicions first, and then his affirmations, should not have any effect on Daniel.

The latter, without desisting from his occupation, his eyes bent down on the anvil, put away the hammer he had been using, and began to polish a piece of armour with a file, whilst in low tones he began to mutter disjointed sentences as though his lips mechanically were repeating the ideas which crossed his mind.

" Je ! Je ! Je !" he went on repeating, and laughing in a strange diabolical manner ; " So my Sara, the pride of our tribe, the staff of my

old age, a dog of a Christian believes he will rob me of? . . . And you also believe that he will do it, do you? Je! Je! Je!" he continued, ever speaking to himself, and always laughing, whilst his file would grate with increased noise. "Je! Je! Je! 'Poor Daniel,' my people will say; 'he is in his dotage! What does that decrepit tottering old man want such a daughter for, so beautiful and so young, if he knows not how to guard her from the covetous eyes of our enemies?' Je! Je! Je! do you think perchance that David sleeps? Do you believe that if my daughter has a lover . . . which might very probably be the case, that if that lover is a Christian, and intends to take her away, and does take her—for all things are possible—and even arranges to fly away with her—for that is also easy—and for instance flies to-morrow, which is possible; do you believe that Daniel will allow himself to be robbed of his treasure? do you believe that he will not know how to revenge himself?"

"But," exclaimed the youth, interrupting him, "do you perchance know . . ."

"I know," Daniel said, as he rose up and gave him a tap on the shoulder, "I know more than you do, who know nothing, and would not know even the little you do, had the hour not arrived for saying it all. . . . Farewell! Tell our brethren to assemble together with all speed. To-night, within an hour or two, I shall be with them. Farewell!"

Saying this, Daniel gently pushed his interlocutor towards the door, and dismissed him; then gathered together his tools and began to bolt and bar the door of his shop. The noise caused by pushing the bolts prevented the young man who had just left the shop from hearing the closing of the little latticed window above, where the Jewish maiden had been sitting at work.

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## II.

It was the night of Good Friday, and the inhabitants of Toledo, after assisting at the office of Tenebræ in its magnificent cathedral, had retired to sleep, or were recounting to each other by the fireside legends and tales,

such as those of “*Cristo de la Luz*,” which was stolen by some Jews, and left a trail of blood by which the crime was discovered ; or the story of the “*Santo Niño de la Guarda*,” in whom the implacable enemies of our faith renewed the cruel Passion of Jesus. A deep silence reigned throughout the city, broken at intervals either by the far-distant voices of the watchmen, who in those days guarded the Alcazar, or by the long wailing sighs of the wind as it surged and moved with grating noise the weather-vanes of the towers, or whistled among the many turns and corners of the streets and lanes. The night was far advanced, when the owner of a little boat fastened to a post near the windmill, which seemed to have become consolidated at the base of the rocks bathed by the river Tagus, and upon which river stands the city, saw approaching the banks, coming down the slopes in a laboured manner by a winding narrow path leading to the river, a person whom, judging from his impatience, was the person he awaited for in his boat.

“ That is she !” the boatman muttered be-

tween his teeth; "it really seems as though to-night the whole race of these Jews were in revolt . . . where in the world will this assignation with Satan be kept that they are all hastening to my boat when the bridge is close by? . . . Certainly it bodes nothing good that they thus avoid meeting the sentinels of *San Servando* . . . but no matter, they pay me well by employing my boat, therefore I care not what they are about."

Saying this, the good man seated himself in his boat, arranged the oars, and when Sara, for it was she whom he had apparently been waiting for, had also taken her seat in the boat, he began to row towards the opposite shore.

"How many have crossed to-night?" Sara inquired, ere they had barely left the windmill, and as though referring to some previous conversation.

"I have been unable to count them," he replied, "but there have been hordes! . . . It appears this is their last meeting night."

"And do you know what they are about, and why they are leaving the city at these untimely hours?"

"I do not know . . . but they are awaiting some one who is to arrive to-night . . . I do not know what for, although I suppose for no good purpose."

After this brief dialogue, Sara lapsed for some moments into a deep silence, as though endeavouring to arrange her thoughts. "Doubtless my father has come to know of our love, and is preparing some terrible vengeance. I must know where they are going to, what they are doing, and what they intend to do—a moment of hesitation and I may lose him."

When Sara, rising up, and as though to drive away the horrible doubts which assailed her mind passed her hand over her brow covered with a cold perspiration, the boat was touching the opposite shore.

"Good man," exclaimed the beautiful Hebrew damsel, giving some coins to her conductor, "is that narrow path winding among the rocks the road they have taken?"

"Yes; and when they reach the *Cabeza del Moro* they turn towards the left, after that only Satan and themselves know where they

are wending their way to," replied the boatman.

Sara sped hurriedly away in the direction pointed to. For some moments the good man watched her retreating form as he saw her alternately appearing and disappearing among the dark labyrinth of black, broken rocks; and when she reached the height called the *Cabeza del Moro*, its black point stood out for a moment in bold relief against the blue sky, then she disappeared among the shades of night.

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### III.

Following the track of the road upon which is found at the present day the Hermitage of the Virgin of the Valley, and some few yards from the point called by the people of Toledo the *Cabeza del Moro*, there existed even in those days the ruined remains of a Byzantine church anterior to the Arab conquest. Around the stony remains strewed about the ground, grew thistles and briars, and half-hidden among the weeds stood a destroyed capital of a

column, or huge stone block, rudely sculptured with an ornamentation of twining leaves, horrible grotesque reptiles, and monstrous human figures. Of the temple itself nothing remained standing but its lateral walls, and a few broken arches overgrown with ivy.

When Sara, whom a supernatural presentiment seemed to guide, reached the spot pointed out by the boatman, she vacillated a few moments undecided which road to take; but at length she turned with firm and resolute step towards the deserted ruins of this church.

And in truth her instincts had not deceived her. Daniel, who no longer smiled—Daniel, no longer the weak, humble old man of yore, but breathing wrath and shooting flames of fire from his round eyes, seemed animated by the spirit of vengeance and surrounded by a multitude longing, like him, to satiate its thirst of revenge and hatred upon one of the enemies of their religion; all were there, Daniel running to and fro, giving every necessary order with horrible solicitude, encouraging others and arranging all the implements for the consummation of the astounding work which

he had meditated and planned day after day when impassive and smiling he hammered his anvil in the little workshop of Toledo.

Sara, who had reached even to the walls of the ruined church unobserved, favoured by the darkness of the night, was obliged to make a supreme effort in order to suppress the terrible shriek of horror which rose to her lips when she looked in and saw what was about to take place. By the red fulgence cast around by the flames of a fire in the centre, she saw reflected on the ruined walls the forms of that circle, and she seemed to see some one endeavouring to raise a heavy cross, whilst others were weaving a crown with branches of sharp-pointed briers, and others again driving large iron nails into the cross. A frightful thought flashed across her mind : she remembered that her race had been many times accused of mysterious crimes. She vaguely called to mind the terrible story of the "Crucified Child," which until then she had thought a gross calumny invented by the people in order to cast scorn and insults upon the Jews.

But now not a doubt remained on her mind ;

there, before her very eyes, rose up those horrible instruments of martyrdom, and the fero-cious executioners were only awaiting the victim.

Sara, welling over with holy indignation, impelled by a generous wrath, and animated by the indestructible faith in the true God which her lover had infused into her soul, was unable to contain herself at the sight of that spectacle, thus suddenly placed before her eyes on the threshold of the temple, and she boldly advanced towards the group.

When that base, vile group saw her standing before them, they uttered a cry of surprise, whilst Daniel approached his daughter, and in a threatening manner and low, hissing voice asked her, "What do you seek here, hapless one?"

"I come to cast down before you," Sara replied in a firm, clear, resolute voice, "all the reproach of your infamous work. I come to tell you that you in vain await the victim for the sacrifice, unless you purpose to slake your thirst in my blood: because the Christian whom you intended for your victim will not

come, for I have apprised him of your evil intentions and treachery."

"Sara!" cried the Jew, beside himself with rage, "Sara, that is not true: you could never have thus turned traitor even to the point of revealing our mysterious rites—and if it *is* true that you have revealed them—then you are not my daughter." . . . .

"No: I am no longer your daughter: I have found another father, a Father Who is all Love. A Father Whom you nailed to a shameful Cross, and Who died upon it, that He might redeem us and open wide to us, for all eternity, the portals of heaven. No, I am no longer your daughter, because I am a Christian, and I am ashamed of my origin."

On hearing these words pronounced with all the power and fulness which Heaven alone places in the mouths of martyrs, Daniel, blinded with fury, cast himself upon the beautiful Jewess, threw her down on the ground, and, as though he had become possessed by an evil spirit, dragged her by her hair to the very foot of the cross, which seemed to be opening its fleshless arms to receive her, and exclaimed

to the bystanders : " I deliver her up to you ; do you exercise justice upon this infamous woman, who has sold her honour, her religion, and her brethren."

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## IV.

On the following day when the bells of the cathedral were filling the air with loud joyous peals announcing the glorious tidings of the world's redemption and the Saviour's resurrection, and the worthy residents of Toledo amused themselves firing rockets and setting fire to the straw effigies of Judas—neither more nor less than is done even at the present day in many towns and villages—Daniel opened the door of his little shop as usual, and with his customary smile began to salute every passer-by without leaving off his work, and kept constantly hammering away.

But the lattices of the little Moorish window of Sara's apartment were never more opened, nor did any one ever again see the beautiful

Hebrew damsel leaning over the window-sill  
of coloured tiles.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is recounted that many years after this occurrence, a shepherd brought to the Archbishop a flower hitherto unknown. This flower bore all the different instruments employed in the Crucifixion and Passion of our Saviour depicted in its stamens: a strange, mysterious plant that had grown twining its tendrils around the broken walls of a ruined church. The spot where it was found growing was dug up in order to ascertain the origin of this marvel, and it is said a skeleton of a woman was found beneath, and buried along with her were a number of instruments of torture corresponding to those which the flower possessed.

Although it was never discovered whose skeleton this was, it was carefully preserved for many years, and held in great veneration in the Hermitage of *San Pedro el Verde*, and the flower, which at the present day has become well known, is called the "*Passion Flower.*"



## Recollections of an Artistic Excursion.

### THE BASILICA OF SAINT LEOCADIA.

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MONG the numberless buildings which the artist meets with in the ancient city of Toledo, the Basilica of Saint Leocadia is undoubtedly one of the richest in recollections and traditions, if not in grandeur and wealth of ornamentation.

Erected over the sepulchre of a saint martyred during the first ages of Christianity, the diverse races that have dominated the Peninsula have written each a thought upon its face as they passed, at the same time obliterating even the very footprints of their predecessors; hence, in our days, narrow in its proportions, and up to a certain point bereft of importance

in the architectural point, the Basilica yet retains that indefinable and mysterious majesty which time impresses on buildings which have defied its destructive course ; that solemn aspect which compels us to linger and uncover respectfully our head when in presence of even a single stone of its remains to which is joined some remote venerable tradition.

When, after traversing a large portion of this imperial city, we lingered upon the heights where the Hospital of Tavera stands, and from whence is descried the Basilica, the day had commenced to draw in, the sky was covered with long shreds of dark lowering clouds through which gleamed an occasional ray of sunshine, lighting up and bathing in its light the tops of the mountains, and gilding the high sharp points and broken walls of the city we were leaving. The plains spreading below at our feet, extended up to the undulating hills which rise up around the farthest ends of the plain, like the tiers of seats of a colossal amphitheatre, which it resembled from the dark patches of green mingling with the yellow and red streaks of its

clay formation, the expanse appeared like a limitless carpet where the harmonious gradations of many colours blended and mingled far in the distance, marking out the different turns and undulations. To our left, and at intervals, hidden among the foliage growing on its banks, flowed the river, kissing the willows which shaded it, and dashing its currents against the windmills that broke its course, until bathing the snowy walls of the Fabrica de Armas, which stands on the side surrounded by luxuriant verdure. When presented to view the whole formed a picturesque landscape; but it might truly be said when gazing upon that panorama that the autumn had spread over it all that peculiar blue veil of melancholy haze which nature envelopes herself in when she feels the icy breeze of sunless evenings, that profound silence, that nameless stillness impossible to describe in words, which, when it takes possession of the spirit, submerges it in an ocean of meditation and deepest sadness. Claudio Lorena, in some of his marvellous landscapes, has attained to grasp and depict on the canvas that secret of

nature, and has reproduced the farewell of day with all the mystery—all that indefinable feeling which accompanies it.

After contemplating for a few brief moments the panorama which we have attempted to describe in a feeble manner, we began to descend into the plains by a path pointed out by our guide, and which winds skirting the heights and slopes of the hill upon which stands the already mentioned hospital.

Once on the plains, the first objects which attracted our curiosity were some fragments of buildings, or walls of brick and mortar that seemed to belong to a remote period. And in truth they were fragments of Roman construction, strewed here and there, half hidden among tall grasses, and which still mark out to the traveller the place where, in the time of the Cæsars, stood the great city, which in our days has once more risen up upon the seven hills that formerly had been its cradle.

At the distance of about a hundred yards from these vestiges of the ancient city, our sight was arrested by new ruins. The huge

remains of the circus of the gladiators seemed suddenly to spring up among the briars and brambles growing on its arena, like gigantic boulders of rocks which, struck by lightning, have been rent asunder, and in huge pieces have rolled down from those heights into the valleys.

We hastened our steps until penetrating into the centre of the amphitheatre, which marks out its circular form by a broken row of seats made of brick and mortar, which alternately appear and become hidden away, following the undulations of the ground in which it has become half buried.

It were vain in our days to give form and colouring to the thousands of ideas and thoughts that swept across our minds on contemplating the mute spoils of that Titanic era, which, after subjugating the world under its civilization, left at each term or end of its limit its wondrous footprints. So many were the thoughts that crowded the imagination, like light waves moved by the wind, so confused as they mingled one into the other without time or space for completing them, and fleeing

away like the vague recollections of a dream, that they could not be joined or combined; and were like those light phantoms, the inexplicable phenomena of inspiration, which, on attempting to materialise them, lose their beauty, or escape like the butterfly, leaving in the hand that endeavours to arrest its flight the golden dust which embellishes its wings.

We left the circus, and continued our walk across a wide *via Romana*, of which, however, only a few vestiges remain. These are collected together, and seem huge arches, among the crevices of which creep the wild convolvulus; yet these ruins are broken pedestals or ruined walls, and scarcely rise sufficiently above the ground to indicate the class of construction to which they belong. We had scarcely spent a quarter of an hour traversing the plains, when our guide drew attention to a small building, where, upon its walls, we observed three series of Arab arches imbedded, rising one above the other, and sheltered from the inclemency of the seasons by a slate cupola and a lowly tiled roof.

By degrees as we approached nearer we

began to discern, rising over some ruined walls, behind which grew clusters of trees and above their tops an iron cross, which indicated the religious character of the building. And in effect the building we were looking upon was the ancient Basilica, known at the present day as that of *Cristo de la Vega*.

At length we reached the iron railing which guards the entrance of the portico or covered walk which leads to the building, upon which stood the iron cross we have mentioned above. The road is formed by a wall on either side, along which grow rows of cypresses, their trunks covered with creeping ivy and blue convolvulus, and at their foot are numbers of white-rose trees twining their flowers with those of the iris and *immortelle*. A deep silence reigned around us; the merest sigh of the breeze as it moved the leaves was sad; even the distant notes of the swallows as they crossed in their flight and flew around our heads, seemed like melancholy weeping sounds. The dark cypress grove through which we walked—the pale scentless flowers that bordered our path, seemed to parody the

walks of a garden ; but the nettles growing upon its sandy soil, the marigolds, which in clusters of yellow flowers waved like the tufts of feathers of a helmet upon the walls, the grey indefinable fleeting tints of twilight, those tints which contributed to heighten the dull aspect of the clouds massed together in the horizon, the low, murmuring ripple of the river that turns and winds its course among the broken rocks which seem to be endeavouring to arrest its flowing waters—all things contributed to transfix the spirit with a religious awe, and, without knowing why, did not permit us to speak but in hushed, low tones, compelling us to move in a silent manner as though fearful of awakening those who in that spot slept the sleep of eternity.

Involuntarily our attention became fixed upon the entrance of the Basilica, whose humble exterior forms a singular contrast to the magnificent recollections which there dwell enshrined. The superiority of idea over matter is there seen symbolised. Monuments which its founders judged impossible of destruction ; powerful races that sub-

jugated the whole world under their power; empires constructed with the sword on the ruins of other empires; civilizations which ages contributed to perfect—all has been blotted out, whilst an humble temple, erected over the tomb of a maiden by some obscure, unknown men, who were solely moved to that work by impulses of faith, has subsisted throughout ages, has boldly withstood time, and although losing its original form, yet preserving the spirit, existing in our days alone, with its original name, its same object, in the centre of that plain once covered with gigantic palaces, wondrous circuses, baths without number, and of which only a few fragments remain as a remembrance of past glory.

These thoughts were crowding on our minds and carried us abstracted, when the guide came and broke the spell with his voice, reminding us that the light of day was fast speeding away, and inviting us to enter the church before it should be completely night.

We crossed the threshold of Saint Leocadia. The sudden transition from the exterior light of day to the shadows which filled the

church obscured our sight, and we could at first see nothing. Then, thanks to some expiring rays of twilight which penetrated the high narrow windows, objects gradually became distinguishable and divested of the darkness that shrouded them. Such of our readers who may have gazed upon a picture by Rembrandt, where great masses of shadows surround the light of a single point, and which at once fixes the attention of the beholder, attracting his gaze upon the principal figure, behind which among the shadows, other heads, invisible before, are seen as though coming forward out of the darkness, then others, followed by groups of beings rising up, divesting themselves of the fantastic, transparent veiling of the artist's skill; and when completing the analysis of the whole, you will alone be able to form an idea, though but a vague one, of the interior of the church of Saint Leocadia seen at that hour, when the sun sinks down, and the breeze which presages night, spreads its misty wings, steeped in the waters of the river.

The first figure, which wounded by a ray of

dubious light appeared to divest itself from the shadows, as though evoked by our desire, was the effigy of the Christ which in later days gave the name to the Hermitage. This effigy, which is of the size of life, has the brow bent, the hair falling over the shoulders, one hand holding the cross, and the other extended as though in the act of taking an oath. We, who were acquainted with the mysterious tradition about that image; we, who perchance in the solitude of our chamber have smiled when reading it, were unable to move, and we remained dumb-struck when beholding the outstretched arm, an arm yellow and emaciated; when we looked at the mouth half open and livid, as though from it had just issued those terrible words—“*I am a witness.*”

Away from the spot which preserves its memory, far from the place which yet traces its outline, and where we still seem to be breathing the atmosphere of past ages which gave it life and being, traditions lose their poetic mystery, their inexplicable dominion over the soul. From afar we examine, we

analyse, we doubt: but in that sacred spot faith, like a secret revelation, illuminates the spirit, and we believe.

This first impression having passed away, little by little, and in proportion as we became familiarised with the darkness, we began to distinguish the effigies, the altars, and the walls of the church. As we have said above, nothing particular in an architectural point of view is offered to the eye in that temple; nor are its proportions or details sufficient to produce that feeling of astonishment caused by the marvellous works which the same art that raised up Saint Leocadia for the last time, left spread over Toledo. Only on the exterior, where, as before said, it is covered by a series of arches twining one into the other, is a study offered to the artist, of a former period to that from which it divides the history of our Arab architecture. But, in return, a crowd of memories rise up, each succeeding one, grander and more imposing than the former, written in indelible characters in those narrow places and nooks: one by one, can all the different epochs be traced with the cer-

tainty of finding upon some one of its pages of glory, the name of this humble Basilica.

The first which is offered to the view of the thoughtful student is that remote age which served as the cradle of Christianity, an epoch abounding in tyrants and heroes, in crimes and in faith. The civilization which expires wrapped in purple, and crowned with flowers, trembles before a civilization that rises up bearing the distinctive mark of austerity, and clothed in sackcloth. The one carried the sword in hand, the other held to mankind the book of eternal truth; and the steel dominates, but reason convinces. Behold the reason why the Cæsars cast fruitlessly their arrows of wrath from the heights of the Capitol upon the proscribed heads of the disciples of the Lord: behold the reason why its conquering legions of the earth found it impossible to conquer those myriads, not of warriors, but of old men and tender virgins, who shed their blood with a smile of joy, and died without offering any resistance, confessing their faith and religion, and breaking out in a hymn of triumph. The grain of faith germinates and grows in the

silence of the catacombs—in the darkness of dungeons, in the horrors of the rack, and on the blood-stained arena of the amphitheatre. Persecution in its turn assumes gigantic proportions, and the prey of a feverish delirium runs, thirsting for extermination, after an invisible phantom, and beats the air with its impotent blows, because when it succeeds in reaching the object of its fury, death leaves between its gory hands a corpse, the material envelope of the spirit, which, breaking its bonds, rises to heaven with a smile on the lips defying its cruelty.

From those days rises the sanctuary of Saint Leocadia, erected, according to the most remote tradition, upon the sepulchre of the virgin martyr of that name. The ruins of a Gentile temple lent their broken columns for the pious construction, and the early Christians, protected by the shades and in the silence of night, evaded the Roman sentinels who watched and guarded those ancient walls, and came noiselessly to pray over the rough wooden cross which marks the sepulchre, and to gather strength from the example of a weak woman,

to receive the blessings of the pastors, and, in one word, to bid each other farewell, since they know not whether the sunrise of the following day would shine upon their dead bodies.

But the tribes of the North spread themselves over invaded Europe, and spiritual regeneration of ideas became mingled with the materialism of these races. The empire bows its head before the conqueror, who after destroying its temples and cities, and not finding enemies to combat, seats itself upon the broken ruins of the Capitol to repose from the heat and weariness of war. Then Christianity—that idea which marches silently across desolation and the battle-field, that flame of faith which increases and multiplies daily, more and more gloriously—comes to meet them, and without bloodshed, without violence, without terror, subjugates those indomitable warriors—and in its presence the Roman armies become dispersed like columns of smoke—giving them laws, giving them religion, softens their customs, bridles their passions, forms their laws, and gives them its monarchy and its society.

Among the dark annals of the second epoch of the Christian era, we turn and once more find our narrow sanctuary the work of the first defenders of the faith.

A powerful king with pious hands raises the Basilica over the ancient remains of the tomb, and Art, which has begun to rise from the deep slumber into which it had fallen, and, thanks to a rough imitation of antiquity, unfolds in it the rude ornamentation which adorns it, draining the resources of its simple, ardent imagination. A brilliant era of glory commences then for that building; veneration for it increases; the gifts bestowed on it become great in number, and the privileges accorded to it are many. Those famous councils which gave such a distinguished renown to Toledo, and from which came forth the reforming laws of the Church and State, take place within its walls. The inspired words of learned doctors resounded there, those doctors who, with their sanctity and eloquence, placed an indestructible fence against power; and here came the kings to lay their appeals before its solemn gathering of prelates

and magnates, who, weighing their demands in the scales of justice, legitimised their rights, or cast upon their brows the ban of apostolical excommunication. In that spot, Ildefonso, the fearless champion of the Queen of Heaven, heard from the mouth of Saint Leocadia, who rose up from the tomb, those divine words which fortified his soul, and gave him courage to continue in the arduous undertaking he had commenced. In this spot, where its earth is sanctified by tradition, did they demand for the luminaries of the Church, of the throne, and of wisdom, a narrow space where their bones should rest under the shade of the altar, whilst awaiting the eternal day of resurrection, and of glory.

But the star of the Goths was nearing its setting : Witiza and Rodrigo hastened its fall, and the sons of the Prophet, like a torrent, overspread the peninsula. To-day tolerated, to-morrow persecuted, yet always invincible, ever pure, religion was transmitted from father to son during the Saracen domination, and continued its triumphal march through humiliation and slavery. During this period

the Church, fearing that profanation should touch those venerable remains of the martyr with its sacrilegious hand, removed its sacred relics to the barren rocks from whence Pelayo gave forth the war-cry.

Years passed away, and the Cross returned and was once more elevated upon the towers of Tolaitola ; the standards of Alfonso waved upon its walls : a pious archbishop reconstructed the ancient Basilica, and the Moslem art as it disappeared, left a last thought engraved upon its apsis.

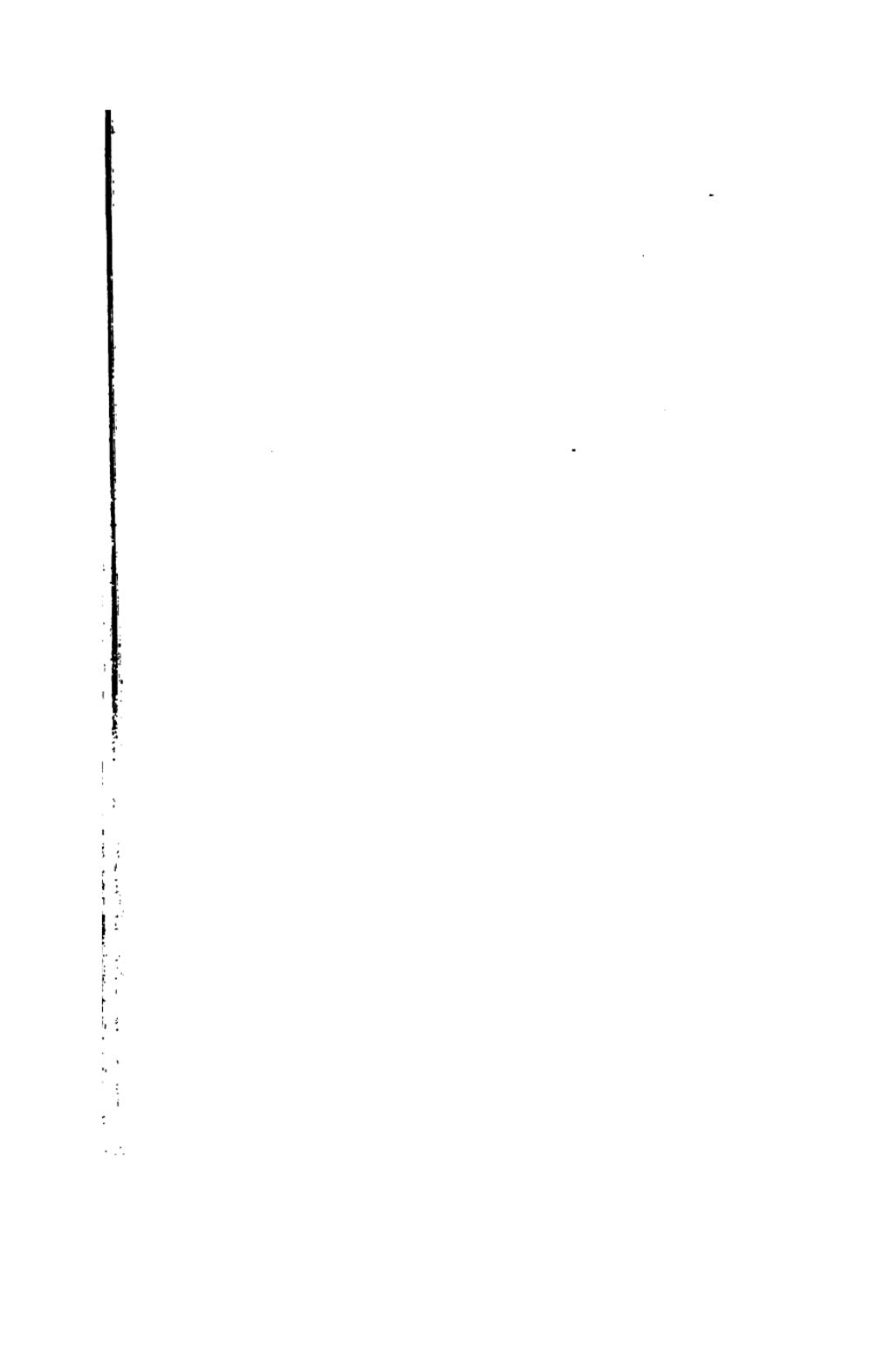
The remains of the holy martyr it had sheltered, after long peregrinations, return to the city which had been her cradle, but not to the temple which bore her name. But can the brilliant pages of the history of the Church which covers that sanctuary, ever be wrested from its walls, although in our days the temple is nearly forgotten, and hidden among the cypresses ? No. The traveller when passing, will yet linger to contemplate the vestiges which seventeen centuries have heaped on its head ; and Christians on crossing its threshold will bend the knee in presence of a witness of

the wrestling of ages, and of the triumphs of faith !

These and similar thoughts were rising up in our minds, when we were reminded that night was approaching, and the hour for closing the hermitage doors had arrived.

For the last time we cast around us a look of sadness, and, full of reverential fear, silently traversed the cemetery, and wended our way to the city through the grove of cypresses which leads to the temple.

The high black points of the towers of Toledo stood out in bold relief against the floating masses of fiery clouds, whilst from the narrow windows and loopholes, a few last rays of the retreating sun shot forth brilliant gleams, looking like a mighty legion of phantoms arrayed for defence upon the heights of the seven hills, and commanding the plains with vigilant glowing eyes.





## The Laurel Wreath.

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**L**N a miserable room, stretched upon a wretched pallet, lies a woman, pale and worn out by suffering.

At her bedside sits a young man with blue eyes and flaxen curly hair, weeping bitterly, as he looks upon that weak, dying form.

His lips move in silent prayer; his eyes are raised to heaven in fervent supplication.

A stifled moan came from the lips of the invalid. The youth rose up and quickly felt her pulse, whilst he kisses her, fearing lest she had breathed her last sigh. "She still lives!" he joyfully cried, "her heart beats and her breathing is calmer, and at least for this one night she will be spared to me. Would that I could leave her but for one hour!"

" My child, are you near me ?" slowly murmured the dying woman, as she opened her weak eyes ; " oh, do not leave me for a single moment. I dread to die without the comfort of embracing you for the last time !"

" Dearest mother, do not fear that I should quit your side for a single moment. Were you sleeping just now ? You were so quiet."

" No, my child ; I was thinking of you—on your life, on your future, on the solitude you will feel when I shall have left you for ever."

" What nonsense !" cried the youth as he tried to look gay ; " put away those thoughts, for you shall soon recover, and happy days will follow these sad ones, and you shall live many years."

" Never, never," she sorrowfully answered. Both mother and son remained silent.

The young man gazed for some time upon his mother ; then he drew from his pocket a printed play-bill, which he began to read by the light of a small lamp that stood upon a table.

As he read over and over again that printed paper, a bitter smile passed over the face of

Edward, for such was his name; then he crumpled up the paper in his hand, as he murmured some unintelligible words, and buried his face in his mother's pillow, weeping bitterly.

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## II.

Death, sorrow, misery, and poverty had jointly entered that chamber. The night was cold, the wind whistled and moaned as it blew through the chinks of that miserable ill-built room, and the dull light from the lamp only seemed to shed a greater gloom over the whole scene. The cold perspiration of the mother's brow, and the burning tears of the son, were mingled together and fell upon that pillow.

A noise as of many people was heard in the street; that noise was like the voice of life to Edward.

The clock of a neighbouring church was heard striking the hour of eight, and soon after the soft tones of an orchestra floated into that death-chamber. The music which the band played was the overture of "*Norma*."

Edward quickly rose, and laid both hands upon his throbbing heart.

The sick woman opened her eyes, and looked amazed at her son, as the orchestra continued playing those sublime harmonies which seem like the swaying of angels' wings.

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### III.

"Edward, do you hear that sweet music?" cried the hapless mother.

"Yes, dear mother," replied the young man, as he vainly attempted to repress the tears which rose to his eyes.

"I thought the music was only a fancy of my mind," added the mother.

"No, indeed, for it comes from the theatre of the Prince, which you know is close to this house," Edward said.

"The theatre of the Prince?" repeated the mother; "I remember that a drama was to be performed in this theatre in which I was to assist. Do you recollect who it was that made me promise to go?"

“ Yes, mother, it was I,” replied Edward.

“ Oh yes, I remember now. The drama was yours, yes, yours ; it had cost you much labour, and you had spent many days and many sleepless nights over it. Yes, I have silently watched you from my bed, and often seen you seize your head with your hands as though you wished to wring new ideas. Where is that drama, Edward ? Is it finished ? Have you any hopes that it will be brought out ? Oh ! I have often heard you say that your future success in life depended upon that composition.”

The youth approached his mother’s bed, and tried to soothe her by saying, “ Think no more about it, because since your illness I have thought of nothing else but of attending to the wants of your failing health. What do I care for my drama ? What do I care for anything which this world can offer me ? All my golden ideas of fancy, every dream of glory, and ambition of my heart, are as dross in comparison to your love, mother, which to me is the height of felicity.”

“ Do you love me so much ?” the mother

asked, as she tenderly gazed upon her son.

“Ah! and do *you* ask me that question? Were it not for the great, immense love which I have for you, and were I to prize the vain laurels of glory more than I do the health and life of my mother, I would not be at this moment by your bedside.”

“Why, my child?” anxiously asked the mother.

“Because on this very night my drama is performed in the theatre of the Prince; and the music from that orchestra which we have heard like the voice of temptation, tells me that before many minutes it will have commenced.

“Good heavens! what do I hear?” the sick woman cried; “this night your drama is being performed, and yet you can tell me this so calmly? You do not run—you do not fly with a throbbing heart to enjoy the triumph, that legitimate triumph which you have purchased at the price of so many sleepless nights of labour and so many days of misery?”

“No, my mother; I shall not leave you.”

"You do wrong," she continued, as she tried to rise, and endeavoured to appear strong, "very wrong indeed, Edward, not to go. See, I am calm now, and in less pain, and the joy of knowing that to-night you will have at last gained the object of your desires, of your long labours, may in a great measure restore me to health. Go, my son, run; I will wait quietly for you, until you return to recount to me the tale of your success and triumph. Would that I also could witness it!"

"It is useless, mother," replied Edward; "I prefer a thousand times to remain by your side."

The mother said no more; but two great tears, perhaps of gratitude, rolled down her pale cheeks. With a mother's instinct she fully understood the whole extent of the sacrifice which Edward was making for her love.

"Come," she said, "come near to my heart, and if for me you renounce these moments of glory, I shall repay you this sacrifice by bestowing upon you torrents of love."

"Glory?" cried Edward, as he clasped her

in his arms, "do you speak of glory ? the glory of this world, which is like a flash of lightning that illuminates but for one moment the path of life, and leaves it darker than before ? I have need to replenish my spirit with a purer, softer, and a more enduring light; and that light is alone found in the loving flame which burns in a mother's heart. The kiss which you are now pressing on my brow is the greatest crown of glory that a soul like mine can desire in this world."

The mother did not reply, for sobs were choking her. Edward also wept, but silently.

The thoughts and feelings of these two loving beings, so full of faith and tenderness, rose to heaven with the incense-cloud of their tears.

Those pure sentiments, expressed in the midst of such abject misery and want, of so much sorrow and pain, would have sufficed to convince a sceptic that all virtue had not disappeared from the world.

## IV.

Half an hour had passed silently away, when a great noise was heard coming from the theatre. The noise was like that of many people clapping their hands. Edward rose up and put his ear close to the wall and listened.

“Do you hear that noise, mother?”

“Yes, my son, I do hear,” she replied, as she slowly moved her head on the pillow.

“It seems to me that the people are applauding—I can distinguish in the midst of the uproar the cries of enthusiasm—the orchestra is beginning to play again. The first act must have been finished, and still the applause continues! . . . Oh, good God! I hear a cry! I hear a number of voices asking for the author to come forward!”

“You, my child?”

“Yes, mother,” exclaimed the young poet, drawing himself up; “yes, I am the author whom they are applauding—I am the one whom they wish to see, and to whom they desire to offer the tribute of their admiration. Oh, glory! glory! I who thought that I cared

nought for thee! I, who but a moment ago despised thee!"

Voices were then heard on the stairs, and footsteps ascending towards that miserable garret, and some one loudly knocked at the door.

"Open! open!" the crowds below were saying. "Open! open! for we are friends of yours, and we wish to see Edward, we wish to speak to him," was said at the door.

Edward drew back the bolt and opened the door, whilst he drew a curtain to conceal his mother.

Several young men were standing on the threshold. "Come with us at once," they said; "the public are frantic with delight, and are asking for the author to come forward. The men are all standing up, waiting impatiently and striking the floor with their sticks, and the women are waving their handkerchiefs."

But Edward stood motionless.

"Do you not hear what we tell you? The people are wild with delight at your work, and are calling you with deafening cries to come

on the stage. Come, let us run," and they attempted to lay hold of him and carry him off in triumph.

"I cannot," he replied in a faint voice, as he pointed to the adjoining chamber; "because behind that curtain my mother is dying."

"Your mother?" they all cried together; and then in silence they gazed upon that curtain behind which was taking place the terrible, mysterious scene of a soul passing away into eternity.

That curtain was seen slowly drawn aside, as though by an invisible hand. The young men respectfully drew back.

A woman, or rather the shadow of a woman, was seen approaching. It was the mother of Edward.

"My son," she exclaimed, "I wish to prove to these gentlemen that my state is not so dangerous as you suppose. I feel much better, indeed nearly well. You see how strong I am; I can breathe easily, and my voice is not as weak as it was. Edward, go with your friends and answer the call of the public; and enjoy for a moment joy and happiness, in order to

strengthen your spirit to support your trials, should my illness be prolonged."

Edward still remained, fixing upon his mother anxious looks.

"Go," she said, as with her wan hand she pointed to the staircase.

"Come on with us," his friends cried.

"Come on," the people below were saying.

And the temptation was greater than his spirit could bear; he hastily took up his hat, and folded his mother in a close embrace, kissing her brow, which he did not perceive was cold as marble, and then dashed down the stairs.

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## V.

No words can express the enthusiastic reception which greeted the young poet when he appeared on the stage. When the public gazed upon him, so young, fair, and handsome, their delight knew no bounds. He was recalled over and over again, and each time he was literally covered with flowers; and when the third act was concluded, and he was once more called

out, the public became frantic, and objects of value were mingled with the flowers which were showered upon him.

A splendid laurel wreath fell at his feet, and remained there for some moments. He had no strength left, nor power of will to lift it up. What was passing around him was so unexpected ; it so greatly exceeded his loftiest ambition, and his hopes were realised so far beyond every expectation, that he seemed stupefied under the pressure of such an ovation. He tried to look at that vast assemblage of people, but his eyes became dimmed ; then a sudden sharp pain shot through his frame ; he saw that sea of heads swaying round and round ; he attempted to fly, but his feet seemed fastened to the boards, and he could not move. He tried to cry out, but not a sound came from his lips. His strength was spent ; excessive joy had been turned into a pang of pain, and he fell senseless on the floor.

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## VI.

When he recovered from his fainting-fit, he was lying on a couch in one of the rooms be-

hind the stage. A number of persons were surrounding him, most of whom were unknown to him. The couch he lay upon was completely covered with flowers. The laurel wreath had been placed on his pillow, and ribands twined among the bay leaves, bearing his name in gold letters.

Edward looked around him with a vague expression of countenance, like one who awakes from a troubled dream.

A clock slowly struck the hour of midnight.

"Good heavens!" Edward exclaimed, as he leapt to his feet, "it is twelve o'clock, and my poor mother has been left alone many hours; oh! I dread to think what may have taken place during all this time!"

"Do not fear for her," replied one of his friends. "She was quite calm, and her only impatience will be to hear of your success."

"No, no," the young poet said, "her calmness does not reassure my anxiety. Come with me, for it will only be after I have folded her to my heart, and recounted to her in detail the success of to-night, that I shall be able to enjoy my happiness to the full."

"Come along, then," they replied together, as they all began to load themselves with the immense quantity of bouquets, wreaths, and valuable things that the public had lavished upon Edward, and which he, in his anxiety about his mother, had completely forgotten, as with hurried steps he ran up the stairs and entered his miserable room.

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## VII.

The lamp had gone out: all was dark and silent in that room.

The friends of Edward remained outside the apartment, as the voice of Edward was heard calling "Mother, mother!"

His call was not answered. The friends struck a light, and looked at each other, anxiously awaiting the end of his search.

A fearful, agonising cry was then heard, which confirmed their fears, and they quickly entered with the light. In the centre of the room a table had been overturned, books and papers were strewed about—this had been

done by Edward as he walked in the darkness.

The curtain of that chamber had been drawn aside. The miserable bed was empty and in disorder: at the farther end of the room, Edward was kneeling on the floor, holding in his trembling hands the inanimate head of his mother; her brow was pale and livid, her eyes wide open.

That mother whom he so dearly loved, and on whose account he had endured so much sorrow and poverty, was only a corpse. She had died during his absence, without a loving hand near to assist her during her last moments, bereft of consolation, and in the midst of a fearful agony, which was clearly depicted on her countenance.

The friends mustered around Edward, endeavouring to comfort him.

“Go from me,” he cried fiercely; “I want nothing from you!”

“Edward, my friend!” the young men said, still striving to console him.

“Go,” he replied; “go, and leave me alone with my mother, whose last words and sigh

you have robbed me of. Oh, mother!" he added, as he lifted up her lifeless hand to heaven, "I have basely preferred the love of glory to your love! I have been a cruel and unnatural son, for I abandoned you in the last sacred hour of your life! I denounce that glory, the fleeting light of which blinded me to my duty!"

"Silence," the friends said, pale and trembling.

"Ill betide these men," continued the hapless son, "who induced me, with their entreaties, to leave you at the very moment when you most required me!"

The friends sorrowfully left the unhappy youth, after placing on the floor the laurel wreath and other trophies.

Exhausted by the many diverse emotions which had passed over him on that night, Edward fell from a state of high excitation into one of deep depression, and he lay insensible on the floor, by his mother's side.

At that moment in every assembly of the regal city, the theme of conversation was the brilliant success of Edward and his drama; and

many (perhaps in a tone of envy) on hearing of his singular triumph may have exclaimed :  
*"Behold a happy man!"*

\* \* \* \* \*

This young man is, at the present day, one of the renowned dramatic poets of Spain. But the remembrance of his mother has never been blotted from his memory.

Every year, on the anniversary of her death, he hastens to place upon his mother's tomb a laurel wreath in memory of the one he gained on that memorable night.

The chaplet of the laurels of fame and glory had been converted by untoward circumstances into a *funereal wreath* !



## The Witches of Trasmoz.

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**F**ROM time immemorial it has been an article of faith among the people of the Somontano, that Trasmoz is the court and point of assignation of greatest importance in the district. Its castle, like the traditional fields of Barahona, and the famous valley of Zugarramurdi, belongs to the category of conventicles of the first order, and is a classic spot for the nocturnal feasts of the broomstick Amazons, the chained toads, and all the motley household of the Goat, its idol and chief. Concerning the foundation of this castle, whose colossal ruins, dark dentilled towers, shaded courtyard and deep moats appear in truth a fit place and worthy scene for such Satanic

personages, there exists a very ancient tradition.

It seems that in the *time of the Moors*, an epoch which to our country people corresponds with the mythological and fabulous ages of history, a king happened to pass through that part of the country which now is Trasmoz, and looked with wonder at a spot where, on account of its marvellous height, rapid slopes and cuttings of the rocks, man assisted by nature might erect an inexpugnable stronghold of great importance, owing to its advantageous proximity to the frontier ; and turning to his retinue, pointed to the height, exclaiming :

“Would that I had a castle on that spot !”

A poor old man was passing at that moment, supporting himself on a staff, his wallet slung over his shoulder, a wretched-looking beggar ; who on hearing the King’s exclamation, at the risk of being ridden down by the retinue, boldly advanced and laid hold of the horse’s bridle, saying :

“Sire, if your Majesty grants me in perpetuity the governorship of the castle, I will

engage to deliver to your Majesty to-morrow at the palace its golden keys."

The King and royal suite laughed long and loudly at the extravagant proposal of the mendicant; they threw him a piece of silver as an alms, whilst the King, in a mocking tone, replied, "Take this money, and buy some onions and bread, and go and break your fast, Señor Governor of the Spontaneous Fortress of Trasmoz, and leave us in peace to continue our journey."

Saying this he gently pushed the old man aside, set spurs to his horse, and started off, followed by his captains, whose armoury, inlaid with golden arabesques, clanked and glistened brilliantly at the moment, half concealed as they were under their wide, flowing Moorish cloaks.

"Then your Majesty confirms my governorship," added the old man, as he bent down to pick up the silver coin, speaking in a loud voice to those who were almost lost to sight in the distance, hidden in a cloud of dust which the horses had raised.

"Certainly," the King replied from afar, as

he turned the base of a mountain, "but on condition that you raise the castle this very night, and that to-morrow you deliver up to me in Tarazona the keys."

The poor man, satisfied with the answer the King had given, raised the coin from the ground and kissed it humbly, then wrapped it up in a corner of his ragged white turban, and continued his way slowly towards the hamlet of Trasmoz. This hamlet consisted of about fifteen or twenty miserable huts, belonging to some shepherds who pastured their herds on the Moncayo. Step by step, slowly, and at times even stumbling, like one who is fatigued and well-nigh exhausted with his journey, and the double weight of age and weariness, did our poor old man at length reach the hamlet, and after purchasing, as the King had bidden him, a piece of bread and a few white onions, he sat on the bank of a stream in which the inhabitants were in the habit of performing their evening ablutions, and at once began to despatch his meal with evident relish. With such haste did he move his fleshless jaws, from which pended a rough grey beard, that

it seemed as though he had not broken his fast that day; and it was many hours since sunrise, for the sun was now fast setting behind the mountain-tops.

Our old man was still partaking of his frugal meal, sitting on the bank, when one of the shepherds of the place reached the stream, made the usual *zalemas*, turned to the east, and began to wash his hands and face, meanwhile murmuring his evening prayers. Some more shepherds, to the number of five or six, followed, and also performed their prescribed evening ablutions ; and when they had all concluded their prayers, the old man beckoned to them, and said :

“ I am very pleased to see that you are such good Mussulmans, and that neither your occupation nor the fatigues of your calling deter you from performing the holy ceremonies which the Prophet enjoins on his faithful followers. The true believer, sooner or later, obtains the prize : some reap their reward on earth, others in paradise, and others again are rewarded in both. To the latter number you will assuredly belong.”

The shepherds had not taken their eyes off the old man during this harangue, and as his appearance was that of a beggar, judging from his tatters and rags and miserable meal, they wondered how this would end, expecting of course that it was only a prelude for asking assistance; but to their great surprise he continued his discourse in this manner:

"I have come from distant lands, seeking loyal servitors for guarding and keeping a famous castle. I have sat on the edge of fountains where the water flowed over basins of porphyry, under the shade of the palm trees which surround the mosques of the great cities, and I have seen many perform their ablutions in its waters, some for mere cleanliness' sake, others to do as the rest, the greater number merely to make a display of a form of piety. Then I have seen you in these solitudes, far from the gaze of the world, attending to your duties solely for Him who watches the actions of mortals, complying with our holy rites actuated by the consciousness of duty, and I have said to myself: Behold here men faithful to their religion; equally so will they

be faithful to their trust and true to their word. Henceforth you will wander no longer through the snow and in the cold, earning the black bread you eat: in the magnificent fortress which I have mentioned to you, you will find abundant food and an easy life. You will guard the watchtowers, attentive always to the signals of the scouts of the field, ever vigilant to light the beacons to shine in the darkness like the fiery plumes of the archangel's helmet. You will guard the drawbridge and the loopholes; you will patrol the towers every three hours, pacing the earthworks and the ramparts. To you I entrust the care of the well-supplied stables: under the guardianship of the one will be deposited the materials of war, and to the other the care of the food supplies."

The shepherds, with increased astonishment, knew not what to make of this startling announcement, and of the unexpected protector which chance had thrown in their way, and though his miserable aspect did not accord with his generous offers, there were not wanting some among the number of listeners who,

in a half-credulous tone, asked him, "Where is this castle? If not far from here, and from the fissures and crevices of these rocks, where we are accustomed to live, and to which we are attached, as all men are to their birth-places, I," said the spokesman, "for my part, will gladly accept your offer, and I think that my comrades will do so likewise."

"You need not hesitate to accept my offer on that account, since the castle I speak of is close at hand," replied the old man in a calm manner; "and when the sun goes down behind the heights of the Moncayo, its shadows will fall over your village."

"How can that be?" the shepherds then said, "because there is no castle or stronghold whatever for some miles around this place, and the first shadow which falls over our village is that from the peak of the mountain behind which it nestles down in the valley."

"Well, upon that very height is the castle built, because in that spot there are stones, and where the stones lie is the castle, just as the hen is found where her eggs are laid, and sheaves in a cornfield," continued this

strange personage, whom his interlocutors no longer hesitated to classify as a lunatic.

“And you, doubtlessly, are the governor of this famous fortress ?” asked one of the shepherds, amid a loud burst of laughter from his companions.

“I am,” replied the old man, who still preserved the same calm manner of speaking, as he looked up smiling in a peculiar way to his listeners; “do I not appear to you worthy of such an honourable post ?”

“No one could be possibly found worthier of the charge !” they all said in one voice. “But the sun has set behind the mountain heights, and the shadow of your castle covers our poor huts. Powerful and terrible Governor of the invisible Fortress of Trasmoz, should you wish to pass the night under cover, we can offer you a handful of straw in our huts, and a welcome ; if you, however, prefer the open air, may Allah preserve you in his holy keeping, and the Prophet fill you with his benefits, and the archangels of night guard you with their flaming swords !”

These words were said in a solemn, deriding

tone, and accompanied by profoundly humble salutations: then, as the shepherds turned towards the road leading to the village, they laughed loudly at their original adventure.

Our good old man, however, was not disconcerted about such a small occurrence, and after slowly finishing his meal, took in the hollow of his hand some water from the limpid stream, drank it, shook the crumbs from his tattered tunic, slung his wallet over his shoulder, and leaning on his staff started anew on his journey, taking the same road as his future servitors.

The night had set in cold and damp. From peak to peak of the elevated crests of the Moncayo long bands of dark leaden clouds, which, kept back by the influence of the sun, seemed to have only awaited its setting to come forth, turning slowly in the horizon, like the dark deformed monsters of the deep which are cast by the storms on the deserted strands. The expanse of the heavens laid to view was gradually becoming paler, passing from red to violet towards the one side, and on the other the moon was appearing, round, fiery, and

large, like a mighty battle shield, whilst countless stars, one by one, were appearing around it, their light dimmed by that of the supreme planet of night.

Our venerable beggar man, who seemed perfectly well acquainted with that part of the country, for he never wavered for an instant in choosing the shortest roads leading to the end of his pilgrimage, left aside the village, and began in a laboured manner to ascend the enormous rocks and traverse the thick brush-wood which, as at the present day, covered the rugged slope of the mountain. He at length reached the summit, when the shadows had completely overspread the earth, and the moon, which at intervals allowed herself to be seen across the dark clouds, had risen up to the first circle of the heavens.

Any one else, impressed with the solitude of the spot, the profound silence of nature, and the fantastic panorama of the rugged Moncayo, with its countless undulations, its lofty peaks covered with snow, which seemed like the waves of an immovable gigantic sea, would have feared to venture among those thickets,

which even the shepherds hardly dared to enter in the broad daylight ; but the hero of our narrative, whom by this time you must doubtlessly have suspected, and if you have not yet suspected it, will soon see clearly demonstrated, was a Magician of great importance. Not satisfied with having scaled the immense height, he mounted the point of the highest rock, and from that aerial spot began to look around him with all the intrepidity of an eagle which in its nest pending from a cliff on the brink of an abyss fearlessly scans its terrible depths.

When he had reposed for a few moments from the fatigues of his journey, he drew from his wallet a case of particular make, a very old worm-eaten book, and a green candle, short and half spent. With his bony fleshless fingers he rubbed the ends of this case, which appeared to be of some metal, and made in the form of a lantern, and by degrees as he rubbed, a sort of dull fire was seen issuing, bluish, pale, and flickering, until at length a flame burst forth, and a light shone. With this light he kindled the green candle,

and by its pale reflection, after putting on a pair of enormous spectacles, he commenced to turn over the leaves of the book which he had placed on a ledge of the rock before him.

Whilst the Necromancer was turning over the leaves of the book, covered with Arabic, Chaldean, and Assyrian characters, traced in blue, black, red, and violet inks, and with figures and mysterious signs, he murmured between his teeth unintelligible phrases, and from time to time would stop reading to repeat a singular theme, a kind of lugubrious psalmody, accompanied by stamping the ground with the foot, and waving his hand as though he were addressing some one.

When the first part of this magic litany was concluded, in which he had called out the names, which I cannot repeat, of all the spirits of the air and of earth, of fire and of water, a strange noise began to be heard, a sound as of invisible wings beating the air, a confused murmur as of many people whispering. In the stormy days of autumn, when the clouds heaped together in the horizon seem to be threatening heavy rain, and the cranes sweep

across in dark circles, then is heard a similar noise. But what was most particular and extraordinary in this case was that there was nothing to be seen, and even when this swaying of wings was at its loudest and appeared nearest, and even its flappings moved the leaves of the neighbouring trees, and the murmur of these unintelligible words became more distinct, although spoken in low tones, all things seemed like an illusion or a dream. The Magician with his glance swept all directions, contemplating what to his eyes alone was visible, and doubtlessly satisfied with the result of his first inspection, he turned to renew his reading. Scarcely had his trembling voice, cracked and nasal, begun to be heard pronouncing the entangled words of the book, than a deep silence seemed to fall around him, so profound that it appeared as though the earth, the planets, and the genii of night were hanging on the lips of the Necromancer, who at one time pronounced sweet phrases and soft inflections, as though in the act of supplication, at others spoke in severe, energetic brief accents, like one who commands.

In this way he read for a great length of time, until he concluded the last page, when a murmur arose in the invisible auditory, similar to the sound produced by a congregation in church saying *Amen* together in a thousand different tones of voice. The old man, who by degrees as he repeated those fiendish conjurations, was gradually becoming excited, and gaining fresh energy and supernatural vigour, closed the book with a great noise, blew out the green candle, and removing his huge spectacles, stood upright on the high peak upon which he had been sitting, and from whence he commanded a view of the windings of the Moncayo, the rocks and abysses which surround it. Then, standing with head erect and extended arms, the one towards the east, the other to the west, he lifted up his voice, and addressed the infinite multitude of invisible mysterious beings, that, chained to his words by the power of his conjurations, were submissively awaiting his orders.

“Spirits of the water and of the wind ! ye who know how to pierce the rocks, and crush the stoutest trunks of the mightiest trees, move and obey me !”

At first softly, as when a flock of doves rise up to take flight, then increasing in power as when the tattered shreds of a sail flap against the mast of a ship, was the noise heard of wings folding and unfolding with incredible rapidity; and that noise grew until it became a frightful roar, like the sound of a terrific hurricane. The waters of the neighbouring torrents bounded and fell in the cascades, frothing and writhing like furious serpents; the air, agitated and fierce, whistled and moaned in the cavities of the broken rocks, raising whirlwinds of dust and dried leaves, and bending low to the ground the lofty tops of the trees. Nothing was wilder and more horrible in its way than that tempest circumscribed within that narrow circle, whilst the moon rose silent and calm above in the heavens, bathing the aerial far-distant heights of the Cordillera with its serene luminous brilliancy. The rocks crunched as though their clefted fissures were opening wider still, and impelled by a secret hidden power, threatened to become blown to pieces. The trunks of the strongest trees snapped and cracked ready to crumble to

atoms, as though a sudden disturbance of their fibres was breaking open their hardened bark.

At length, after feeling the mountain shaken three times, the stones parted into pieces, the trees divided their timber into beams and blocks; and both trees and stones then began to be flung about in the air, and fell like thick rain upon the very spot the Necromancer had pointed out to the shepherds, his future servitors.

These colossal trunks, these immense blocks of granite and dark slate, which seemed cast about as by chance, fell, however, one upon the other, with admirable order and arrangement, and began to form a very high bulwark in the manner of an earthwork; whilst the waters of the torrent, dragging sand and small pebbles with the current, as well as chalk from its bed, completely filled up the chinks and crevices with an indestructible mortar.

“The work progresses! Courage! courage!” the old man cried; “let us employ every instant, because the night is short, and soon the cock will crow—the trumpeter of day!”

Saying this he bent low over the edge of a profound precipice, opened by the force of the convulsions of the mountains, and, as though he addressed the invisible beings dwelling in its depths, continued :

“ Spirits of earth and of fire ! ye who know the treasures of metals hidden within the earth, and that pierce its subterranean passages with burning lava ! move, and follow my orders !”

The last echo of his words of conjuration had scarcely died away when a low, rumbling noise began to be heard, like that of distant thunder ; a noise which continued rising and increasing, until it became similar to that produced by a regiment of horsemen crossing at a gallop the bridge of a fortress—the clanking of armoury, the rattle of chains, of horses’ gear, and the metallic-sounding noise of lances striking against shields.

By degrees, as this uproar attained greater proportions, among the fissures and breaks of the rocks could be seen issuing a vivid, brilliant fulgence, like the glare emitted by a fiery forge ; and the cavities of the rocks

echoed the noise of many hammers striking with terrible force upon anvils, caused by the Gnomes working the ore from the mines, making doors, gates, weapons of every description, and all the ironwork indispensable for the security and completion of the future stronghold. It was an uproar which baffles description. On one side the wind howled as it wrenched the rocks, and piled them up on the summit of the mountain; on the other, the torrent roared, mingling its sounds with the crackling of the trees, and the incessant hammering which, in measured strokes, fell upon the anvils, as though following that unearthly symphony.

The inhabitants of the village, suddenly awakened from their sleep by such an extraordinary deafening uproar, dared not show their faces at the little narrow windows of their huts, much less venture outside to ascertain the cause of all this disturbance; and there were some amongst them who, terror-stricken, believed that the end of the world had come, and Death was about to appear and stalk through the whole country, wrapped

in a corpse-cloth, riding a fantastic yellow charger, such as the Prophet depicts in his revelations.

All this continued until a few moments before day-dawn, when the cocks of the village began to shake their feathers and to salute the coming day with sharp, ringing tones. The King, on his return to the capital, after his short excursion through this part of his dominions, had accidentally slept that night in Tarazona, and either because he was an early riser, or because the apartment and bed were strange to him, arose at this moment from his bed, and, after arousing his household, went out for a walk in the gardens adjoining the palace. He had scarcely spent an hour wandering through the mazy windings of its groves, conversing in as friendly a manner with one of his knights, who accompanied him—as such a King, and a Moor to boot, could do with one of his subjects—when one of the most nimble of the scouts of the frontier quickly approached him, covered with dust and perspiration, and, after making the usual salutation, said :

“Sire, towards the side of the territory of Castile an extraordinary thing is taking place. Upon the summit of the mountain of Trasmoz, and where but yesterday nought was seen but rocks and briery thickets, we have discovered at daybreak a castle, which stands so lofty, great, and strong, that it excels all the strongholds and castles of your Majesty’s dominion. At first we doubted the testimony of our eyes, believing that perhaps the morning mists massed together caused the deception; but after the sun rose, and the mists had dispersed, the castle remains, gigantic and terrible, dominating from its high watch-tower the whole of the surrounding country.”

The moment the King heard this narrative, he recollect ed the meeting of the beggar, and turned with a severe look to those around him, his Majesty fully suspecting that some of his Emirs, apprised of the dialogue which had passed between them the previous day, were attempting to practise a hoax upon him--a thing unprecedented in the annals of Moslem etiquette, and, in a tone of badly-concealed anger, he exclaimed, whilst he played with the

hilt of his dagger in a peculiar manner, as he usually did whenever his wrath was about to break its bonds :

“ Quick, run for my fleetest steed, and let us go to Trasmoz; for I swear by my beard, and by that of the Prophet, that if this message of the scouts is an invention, on the very spot where the castle ought to stand, I will set up a gibbet for all those who have invented the tale !”

Thus spoke the King, and a few moments later he was flying at full speed towards Trasmoz, followed by all his retinue. Before reaching what is called El Somontano, which is a cluster of heights and valleys, gradually rising up to the Cordillera which overlooks the Moncayo, there is an eminence on the side of Tarazona, capped with fogs and clouds, like the gigantic colossal monarch of the whole range of mountains, and which hides Trasmoz from view until its height is reached. The King had nearly arrived at the highest peak of this summit, known in our days under the appellation of la Ciezma, when, to his great surprise, and that of his followers, he perceived

coming towards him the little old man with his wallet, and dressed in the same ragged tunic of the previous day, the identical soiled turban, the same strong, rough staff, upon which he leaned whilst, in a bantering tone, the King had thrown him a coin to buy onions and bread, after hearing his laughable propositions. The King stood still before the old man, who threw himself on his knees ; and, before the King had time to recover from his surprise and astonishment, drew from his wallet, wrapped in a purple cloth, two golden keys of exquisite make and finish, saying, as he presented them to his sovereign :

“ Sire, I have fulfilled my engagement ; may your Majesty be pleased to comply with your promise.”

“ But—is not this castle a myth ?” the King asked suspiciously, as he alternately fixed his eyes upon the superb keys, which, on account of their marvellous workmanship and rich metal, were worth a treasure, and upon the old man, whose miserable look and wretched dress were those of a beggar.

“ Go a few steps farther, sire, and see,”

replied the Governor, for as such we must consider him from this moment, since the King had pledged his word, and, at least in such like histories, kings have the reputation of never breaking their pledged word !

The King advanced a few steps ; he reached the highest point of la Ciezma, and in effect the Castle of Trasmoz rose up before his eyes—not the castle of our day, but the enchanted stronghold of the olden times, with its five gigantic towers, its aerial watch-turrets, its deep moats, its doors covered with iron plates, enormous and strong, its drawbridge and its ramparts crowned with pointed turrets.

\* \* \* \* \*

On reaching this part of my narrative, I find that, without knowing how, I have been wanting in my promise of telling you about the Witches of Trasmoz, and I have recounted to you instead the legend of its castle. These tales are like cherries in a basket,—when you attempt to take one up, a number are sure to follow clinging to it. What shall I do ?

“Legend for legend.” Behold the first which became entangled around my pen ! and

now that you have become acquainted with its Satanic origin, you will better understand the reason why the witches, whose history I am about to recount, have such a marked predilection for the ruins of this castle, and are always found within, as though in their native home.

Now for the history of the witches, such as the people of the neighbourhood recounted to me.

The Castle of Trasmoz had already passed into the power of the Christians, and these again, when the long-continued wars of Castile and Aragon were at an end, had abandoned it. It is said that in those days there lived in Trasmoz a Padre Cura, who was so punctual in the fulfilment of all his duties, so humble towards his inferiors, and so full of ardent charity for all the poor and the miserable far and near, that his name, which already bore a spotless reputation for virtue, became known and venerated throughout every town of that territory.

Many were the signal benefits which the in-

habitants of Trasmoz had received from the exhaustless charity of this good Cura, who could not be induced to leave his flock, even with the tempting offer repeatedly made by the Bishop of Tarazona, of making him a canon of the cathedral church ; but the greatest benefit of all which he had conferred upon them was to deliver them by his prayers and exorcisms from the dire presence of the witches, who on certain nights of the year would come from the most remote places of the kingdom, and congregate within the ruins of the castle, which, perhaps on account of its having been founded by a Necromancer, they considered as their own property, and the most suitable place for their nocturnal meetings and fiendish conjurations ; and as before that epoch many other exorcists had attempted to dislodge these evil spirits, yet their prayers and exorcisms had proved useless, the fame of Mosen Gil the *alms-giver* (for by this appellation was our Cura known) became all the greater on account of the difficulty of carrying out to a happy conclusion this great undertaking which had been effected by his powerful

prayers and the merit of his good works. The popularity and respect which the country-people manifested towards him increased in proportion as age seemed to sever, so to say, the last bonds which might bind him to terrestrial things, purifying his virtues, and he even increased the generous abandonment of every comfort, in order to be of greater service to the poor ; and when the venerable priest, bowed down by the weight of years and increasing ailments, would venture out to take a turn around his humble church, it was beautiful to see how the little children would run to kiss his hand, the men would reverently uncover their heads, and the women kneel to ask his blessing, and considered themselves happy if they could obtain a shred of his well-worn *soutane* as a relic and an amulet against witchery.

And thus our good Mosen Gil lived happily and satisfied, in perfect peace with all around him ; but as there is no complete felicity in this world, and the devil ever walks about seeking occasions for evil-doing, it was no doubt through his agency that by the death of a younger

sister, a widow in reduced circumstances, a niece should come to the house of this charitable Curia, whom he received with open arms as a heavenly legacy which Divine Goodness had assigned to him to be a comfort in his old age.

Dorothea, for such was the name of the heroine of this tale, scarcely numbered eighteen summers : she seemed to have been brought up in the holy fear of God, rather timid in her manners, gentle in her speech, and humble before strangers, like all the nieces of curas I have ever known, but withal thoroughly conscious of the attractiveness of her black lustrous eyes, and fond of finery and of display.

This love of finery, which men consider peculiar to all girls of every rank and age, and which in Dorothea exceeded all her other inclinations, was a continual cause of domestic disturbance between niece and uncle, for the small income, derived from his poor village curacy, which he bestowed in abundant alms-giving among the poor, placed him in great straits ; and with admirable candour would he say that ever since his ordination he had been

endeavouring to save enough to purchase a new cloak, and as yet had been unable to do so.

From time to time the discussions which the demands of the niece gave rise to became more and more bitter, and she would upbraid him with the many wants they endured, and their need of clothing, which they both suffered, owing to his lavishness in giving to the poor not only superfluities, but even what was actually unnecessary. Mosen Gil on these occasions would employ his most vivid arguments of Christian rhetoric, and after telling her that all which is given to the poor is lent to the Lord, was in the habit of urging her not to fret because she might not have a few dresses more during the short days she had to pass in this vale of tears and misery, as the greater the sufferings endured here below with resignation, and the less richly clothed she should be through love of the neighbour, the greater would be the delights of an eternal Paradise, which she should enjoy, robed in divine grace, which is the most beautiful robe conceivable.

But it was of little use for him to preach

this evangelical philosophy to a young maid of eighteen summers, who loved to look her best, and who was fond of ribbons, and moreover had feelings of envy roused by her opposite neighbours, who to-day would put on a new yellow bodice, to-morrow a fresh black skirt, and the day after a blue cloak trimmed with red fringe, dazzling the eyes of the young men for three-quarters of a mile around.

Our good Mosen Gil might well consider his sermons lost, although he did not quite preach in the desert; for Dorothea, though silent, and far from being convinced, continued to scowl at the poor who came to the door soliciting assistance from her uncle, preferring a good jacket with blue ribbons and laces which she had seen at the shop window of the Calle de Botijas when by chance she had gone to Tarazona, to all ornaments and robes which in the distant future could be promised her in Paradise in exchange for her present resignation and self-sacrifice.

Such was the state of affairs, when one evening, the eve of the festival day of the patron saint of the place, and when the Cura

was arranging the church for the festival which was to take place on the morrow, Dorothea sat at the door of her house sad and pensive. All the girls of the village had purchased in a greater or lesser quantity something from Tarazona to wear on the first day of May, and something to bedeck themselves with for the dance which was to take place in the evening. Foremost among these damsels were her opposite neighbours, who, undoubtedly with the object of inspiring Dorothea with envy, were outside their door, busily making up new dresses and bows which their parents had bought them. Only she, the handsomest and most stylish-looking of them all, did not participate in this cheerful bustle, that hurry of sewing, that animated chattering, which commences among the young people of a village when a great and long-expected feast is to take place. But I do her wrong; Dorothea that night had plenty of work to do: Mosen Gil had bidden her knead twenty loaves more than usual for distribution on the following day after Mass among the poor.

At the door she sat, this ill-tempered niece

of the Cura, turning over in her mind many disagreeable thoughts, when an old woman covered with rags and leaning on her staff, evidently weak, and scarcely able to support her tatters, passed the door, and said :

“ My child, give me an alms, and God will repay you a hundredfold in His glory.”

These words, so customary in those who implore charity, pronounced on that occasion in a broken doleful voice, and by a woman whose small gray eyes seemed to twinkle with a fiendish expression, whilst her lips spoke in piteous tones, sounded in the ears of Dorothea like a horrible sarcasm, bringing to her mind the magnificent promises beyond the grave with which Mosen Gil generally answered her continual demands. Her first impulse was to repulse the woman, but she contained herself, on account of her house being the dwelling of the Cura of the village, and she merely replied by turning her back with a gesture of displeasure and ill-humour sufficiently significant.

The old woman, who seemed rather pleased than otherwise, approached nearer to the young maid, and endeavouring to soften as much as

possible her cracked voice, continued saying, her grayish eyes twinkling all the time as the serpent must have done which seduced Eve in Paradise :

“ Beautiful child ! if not for the love of God, at least for your own sake, give me an alms. I serve a master who does not limit his recompense to the other world for those who do good, but rewards them in this, and gives them all they wish for. I have asked charity from you in the Name of Him Whom you know, now I ask assistance for the sake of him whom *I* reverence.”

“ Go away, and leave me in peace ; I am not in the humour to-day to listen to nonsense,” replied Dorothea, who judged that this ragged woman was either out of her mind or in her dotage, speaking to her in such an incomprehensible manner ; and without turning her face to bid her farewell, she was entering the house, when her interlocutor laid hold of her skirt, and detained her for a moment, saying :

“ You think I am out of my mind, but you are mistaken, because not only do I know what I am saying, but also what you are thinking

about, and moreover, the reason for your sadness."

And as though her heart had been an open book laid before her eyes, she repeated to the Cura's niece, who stood dumb-struck, all the thoughts which had passed through her mind in comparing her condition with that of the other village damsels.

"But do not fret," continued this wily harpy, after giving her this proof of wondrous perspicacity, "do not fret; there is a Lord who is as powerful as the one of Mosen Gil, in whose name I have attempted to approach you under the pretext of asking for an alms; a Lord who not only does not exact difficult sacrifices from those that serve him, but even complies with and loves to second all their desires; merry like a juggler, rich as all the Jews of earth put together, and wise even to the degree of knowing all the most hidden secrets of science, in the study of which men toil and labour in vain. Those who worship him live in a continual feast, wear all the jewels and ornaments which they can desire, and possess philtres of such virtue that with them they bring super-

natural things to a happy termination. They make themselves obeyed by the spirits of the sun and the moon, of the cliffs and of the rocky mountains, and of the sea waves, and they infuse love or hatred into whomsoever they please. If you desire to be of the number of his worshippers, if you wish to enjoy all that you desire, you can obtain it all at a very small cost. You are young and handsome, you are also courageous : you were not born to waste your beauty by the side of a sickly, disagreeable old man, who in the end will leave you alone in the world, miserable and penniless, thanks to his extravagant charity."

Dorothea, who at first was an unwilling listener to the old woman's words, began little by little to take pleasure in the delightful picture of the brilliant future spread before her mental view, and though she had not opened her lips during all this speech, she then in a half-credulous manner, asked her what she was to do in order to obtain what she most desired.

The old woman drew from the folds of her ragged apron a green phial, and replied :

“ Mosen Gil has at the head of his bed a holy-water font, from which he every night before retiring to rest sprinkles a few drops outside his window, the one which overlooks the castle, whilst he repeats some words. If you substitute this water for what is in the font, and when you have put out the fire on the hearth you leave the fire-tongs in the ashes, I will come down the chimney to see you, when the last bell for prayers shall have ceased to sound, and the master whom I obey, and who in proof of his generosity sends you this ring, will grant you whatever you can desire.”

Saying this she gave Dorothea the bottle, and placed upon her finger a gold ring set with a precious stone. The niece of the Cura, who was mechanically allowing the old woman to do as she pleased, remained still irresolute, and more astonished than convinced at her words. But so much did the old woman say on the subject, and so vividly did she depict in glowing colours the triumph of her humbled self-love when on the following day she should go to the village ball decked with inconceivable

splendour, that Dorothea at length acceded to her suggestions, and promised implicit obedience.

The evening passed away, and night came on with its darkness and the hours proper for mysteries and conjurations. Mosen Gil, without noticing the substitution of the holy water for an accursed wash, had performed his aspersions, now more than useless, and was sleeping the gentle sleep of the good, when Dorothea, after putting out the fire on the hearth, placed, according to the prescribed formula, the tongs among the ashes, and sat down to await the witch, because nothing less than a witch could that miserable old woman be, who gave away jewels of such value as that priceless ring, and who visited her friends at such untimely hours, coming down the chimney.

The villagers of Trasmoz also slept soundly, like dormice, with the exception of some of the girls, who were up busily making their dresses for the eventful day. The church bells rang the last call, the one called *De las Animas*, and their slow measured strokes became lost in the distance wafted by the breeze,

and echoed among the ruins of the castle, where the last sound died away.

Dorothea had up to that moment remained cool and self-possessed, and had obeyed all the injunctions of the witch, but she now became troubled and fixed her eyes with a degree of agitation upon the chimney down which the old woman was to descend in an extraordinary way.

She had not long to wait, for the last echo of the bell had scarcely died away when the witch suddenly descended on the ashes in the form of a tabby cat, making a purring noise peculiar to such animals, when, with uplifted tail and arched back, they approach a friend. A reddish cat followed this one, then a black one, and then again a tortoise-shell one, and so on up to some fourteen, of different sizes and colours, along with a multitude of green toads with little bells round their necks, and dressed in peculiar little red coats. Once together in the kitchen, the cats began to run about the room, jumping here and there; some on the dresser among the plates and dishes, others upon the chimney-piece, and the greater

number rolling over in the ashes, raising a fine cloud of dust; whilst the toads, rattling their little bells, would stand on the edge of the saucepans turning somersaults in the air, or performing extraordinary tricks like clowns at an equestrian circus. The tabby cat, which seemed to be the chief of the band, and whose grayish eyes Dorothea fancied were similar to those of the old woman, at last stood up on its hind feet on a chair, and addressed her in these words :

“ You have fulfilled what you promised me, and, therefore, behold us here. If you wish to see us in our real forms, and desire that we should help you to knead the bread which your uncle has bidden you to make, raise your left hand, and with it make three times the sign of the Cross, invoking the trinity of hell—Beelzebub, Astaroth, and Belial.”

Although trembling, Dorothea did exactly what she had been bidden, and the cats were immediately turned into women. Some of them began to cut out, and others to sew together, stuffs of many colours, whilst the toads with tiny bright tools were working

earrings and ornaments of gold filigree, rings with precious stones, and making tiny shoes of such elegant finish and workmanship that they were fit to be worn by sylphs or hades. All was bustle and life around Dorothea : even the flame of the candle which lit up this extraordinary scene seemed to dance in its iron candlestick, flickering and spreading its light like a fan, reflecting on the walls the busy circle. This continued until day-dawn, when the village bells began to ring noisily and merrily, in honour of the patron saint of the place, and the sharp crowing of the cocks announced the coming day to the inhabitants of Trasmoz.

The day was spent in feasting and rejoicing. Mosen Gil, without suspecting the part which the witches had played in the making of the bread, distributed the loaves after Mass among the poor. The girls danced on the green to the music of bagpipes and tambourines, showing off their trinkets and the finery they had brought from Tarazona, and, strange to relate, Dorothea, although to all appearance tired out with spending the whole night kneading and

baking bread, and to the no little surprise of her uncle, neither complained of her hard lot, nor did she make any remark about the bands of well-dressed damsels and young men who passed their door, whilst she alone remained lonely and uncared for in her house.

At length night set in, which to the Cura's niece seemed long coming. Mosen Gil retired, as was his custom, when the bells rang the last night-call for prayers, and the young people of the village lit up a tremendous bonfire in the square, around which the ball was to take place. Then Dorothea, taking advantage of her uncle's sound sleep, quickly dressed herself in the splendid robes which the witches had brought and made up, put on her gold filigree earrings with brilliants, which fell on her fresh young cheek like dewdrops upon a full-ripe peach, and with her dainty little shoes, and rings upon each of her fingers, she proceeded to the spot where the young people danced, the guitars and drums playing a merry tune, the whole scene lit up by the flaring light of the ruddy flames, throwing sparks of many colours and lighting up the

adjoining houses, and in the far distance lengthening the shadows of the points and turrets of the castle. The reader may well imagine what an effect her appearance at that moment produced. Her rivals in beauty, who until then had been unsurpassed, now were completely cast in the shade and neglected: the men disputed with each other the honour of claiming a look from her eyes, and the women bit their lips through envy. As the witch had predicted, so it had happened, the triumph of her vanity could not have been greater or more complete.

The feast passed away, and although Dorothea was very careful to keep her dress and jewels hidden away at the bottom of her trunk, she was the talk of the village for a whole month.

“ Well ! well !” the parishioners would say to Mosen Gil, “ you keep your niece in the very pink of the fashion. What finery ! Who would have thought that after bestowing so much on charity, you would yet have enough left to spend in that manner !”

But Mosen Gil, who was goodness itself, and

never even suspected the truth of what he heard, believed that it was all said merely for a joke, and that they chaffed him on account of the humility in the dress of Dorothea, which was unbecoming the niece of a cura, who generally, in a village, holds the first rank among the people; and therefore he would smile and reply, as though to continue the joke :

“ What else do you wish ? Where there is gold it is sure to shine ! ”

The elegance of Dorothea’s toilet was meanwhile producing its desired effect.

Since that night there was no lack of lovers under her windows, music at her door, and assignations round the corner. These serenades and appointments ended in the manner natural to expect, for within two months after the village ball the niece of the Cura was engaged to be married to one of the wealthiest young men of the village; and that nothing should be wanting to her triumph, this young man had been, up to that eventful evening, the acknowledged suitor of one of her opposite neighbours, who had so often provoked Doro-

thea's envy by stitching her fine clothes at the street door.

But poor Mosen Gil, from that time, lost the power of his exorcisms and the virtue of his aspersions. The witches, to his great surprise and that of his parishioners, once more took possession of the castle : numberless diseases afflicted the cattle ; the young people were seized with incomprehensible fits of illness ; the babes were dreadfully whipped at night in their cradles ; and on Saturdays, after the church bells had ceased ringing for prayers, the inhabitants of Trasmoz in dismay beheld passing through the village a long troop of old women riding on broomsticks, some striking the castanets, others playing upon pipes ; but one and all proceeding joyously and merrily towards the castle, where, under the shade of the walls, and of the ruined watch-tower which crowns the mountain, they celebrated their proscribed rites.

Since writing the above I have had occasion to become acquainted with Tia Casca, sister of the famous Casca, and a branch of the

dynasty of the Witches of Trasmoz, which commenced with the niece of Mosen Gil, and will end no one knows where or when. Notwithstanding that, owing to fierce revolutions, other dynasties have seen their last days, and disappeared altogether from the face of earth, this one, on the contrary, if one may judge by the state of the spirits in this country, bears a safe promise of prolonging its existence for a very long period ; bearing in mind the fact that, though the present witch has reached a very advanced age and therefore is not likely to live much longer, yet it is whispered in the neighbourhood that her daughter already manifests some talent in the same profession as her mother, and, moreover, that a granddaughter also shows some special aptitude in that line : so deeply rooted is the belief of the people that witchcraft is hereditary.

It is true, as I have said before, that everything that surrounds one in these parts has such an indefinable air of wildness, mystery, and grandeur, that it predisposes the mind to the belief of supernatural agencies.

As regards myself, I can assure my readers

that I have not been able to look with my own eyes on the actual witch without an involuntary shudder passing through my frame—as, though the wrathful look she gave me, when she noticed the impertinent curiosity with which I watched her movements, could have done me any harm. I saw her a few days ago—when the day was merging into night—as I peered through a sort of grating into her underground habitation. She is tall, spare, wrinkled, and you will hardly credit what I tell you, but she actually has a beard of greyish hair, and her nose is hooked—indispensable embellishments in all witches described in fables.

She was crouching close to the hearth, surrounded by a number of old odds and ends—pipkins, jars, kettles, and copper stewpans; the glare of the fire over which she leaned casting fantastic, weird reflections against the walls. She was boiling something in a pot on the fire, which she occasionally stirred with a spoon. Very likely it was a potato-stew for supper; but, deeply impressed with the scene presented to view, and with the above legend still ring-

ing in my ears, I could not help calling to mind —on hearing the continual boiling and hissing of the stew—that diabolical mess, that horrible, nameless thing, which Shakespeare so vividly depicts of the witches in “Macbeth.”

THE END.



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